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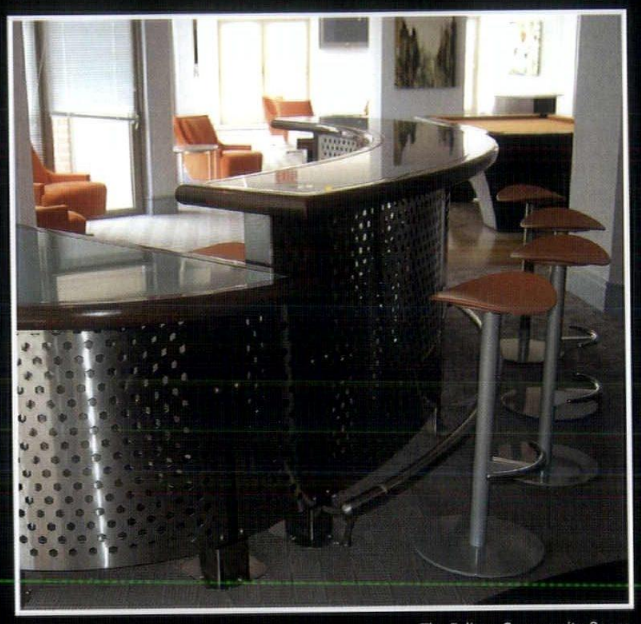
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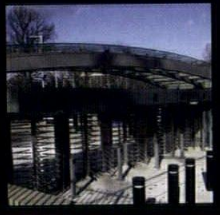
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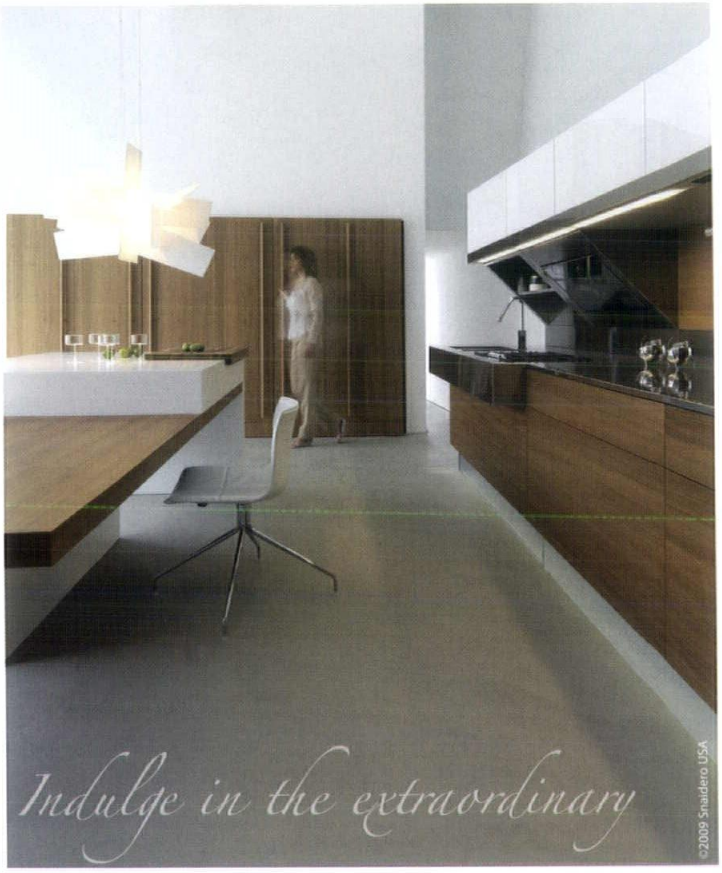
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Waiting area at Bloo Dental, by FORMA Design.

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Vol. 13, No. 3
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www.aiadc.com

Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA / Publisher
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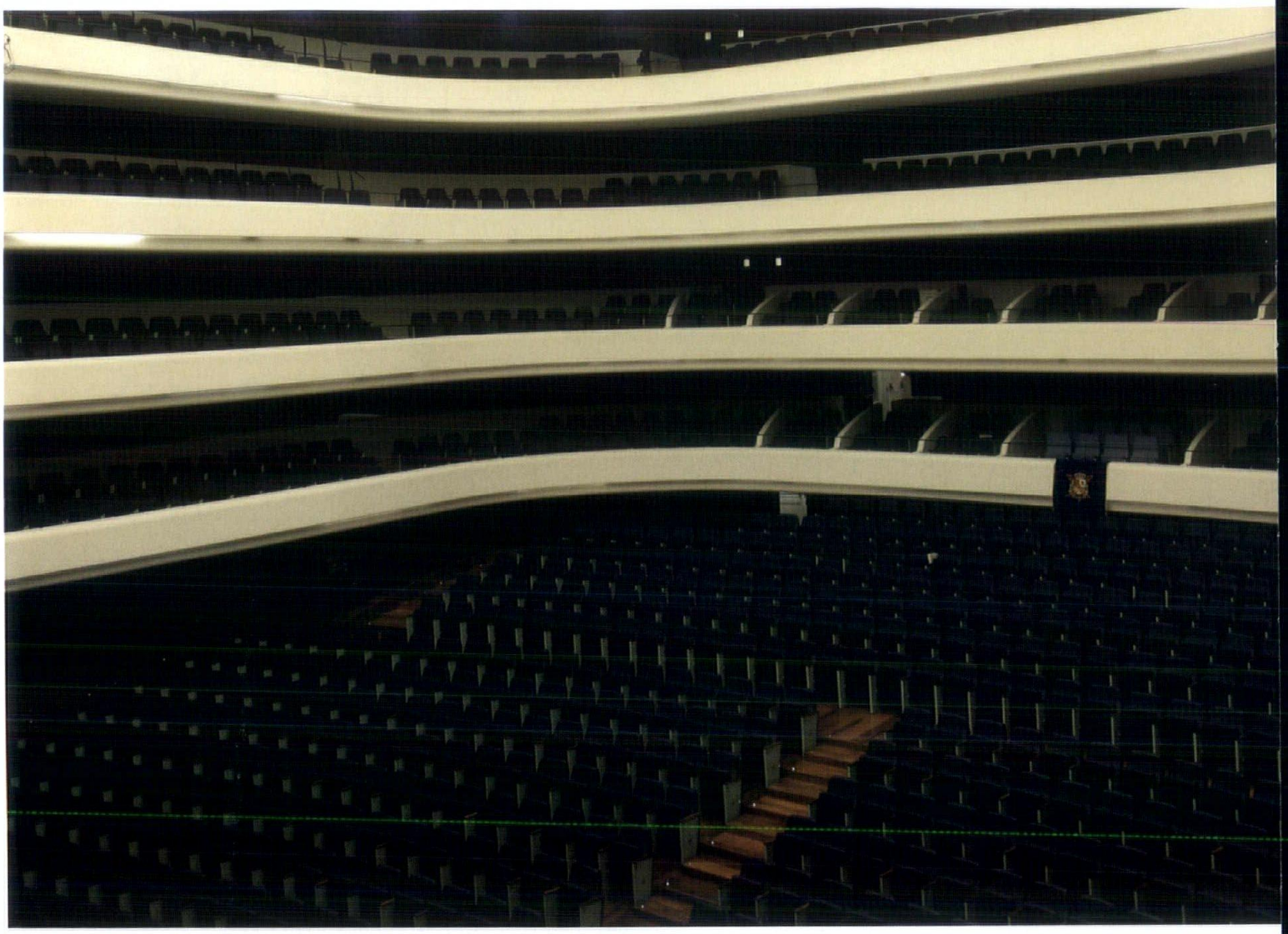
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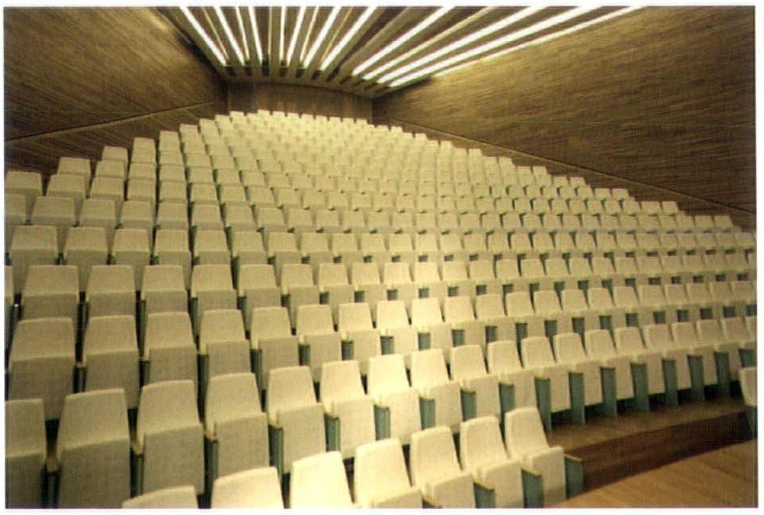
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ON THE COVER: Mandu restaurant, by GrizForm Design Architects. Photo © Paul Burk Photography

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ARCHITECTURE AS AN ACT OF OPTIMISM


David Hamilton

Construction of the **District Architecture Center (DAC)** is now well under way (see page 7). Don't wait for the ribbon cutting—drop by now to observe the work in progress. We've left the front doors uncovered precisely so you can see the design taking shape.

DAC will be of considerable practical value to AIA | DC architects and the public, but as work on the facility progresses, I've come to realize that building it now, in hard economic times, is doing something else important—providing an example of the value of architecture as an act of optimism.

I was reminded of that value during a visit to the National Building Museum's excellent exhibition, *Designing Tomorrow: America's World's Fairs of the 1930s,* which has been extended through September 5. As the exhibition points out, Americans staged and attended these fairs during the Depression years in no small part to reaffirm their optimism about the country's future and see what it might look like. The fairs' visions were put on hold during World War II, but many of them were implemented afterward, producing the built environment of the 1950s and 1960s—the childhood world of the Baby Boomers.

In the wake of 9/11, lengthy wars overseas, and years of economic troubles at home, our country seems to have lost some of its characteristic optimism. The Scottish indie rock band, *We Were Promised Jetpacks,* chose its name with a sense of whimsy, but the phrase captures a disappointment and lowering of expectations that appears to have developed in recent years.

Welcome!

I hope we can regain our country's traditional optimism, and while that isn't the reason for building DAC, in its own small way, DAC can help. The Sigal Gallery at DAC is going to show the public wonderful new designs for houses and other structures, and explain how things like sustainable design can help build a better tomorrow (a phrase we need to start using again without irony).

It's also time for this year's edition of **Architecture Week** September 9 -24, 2011, which will build on last year's success by again involving local embassies to showcase good architecture and design around the world. Check our website, www.aiadc.com for all the details.

So visit the DAC construction site, participate in Architecture Week, and read the articles in this issue of the magazine, which is devoted to **interior architecture.** It's not the same as attending a world's fair, but it will permit you to experience something that those fairgoers did 70-plus years ago—how architecture can strengthen our faith in a better future—and start making it happen.

Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA
Publisher
mfitch@aiadc.com

Contributors

Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP ("Form-Fitting" and "MOI Encore") is an associate with **Eric Colbert & Associates.**

Denise Liebowitz ("Domestic Policy"), formerly with the National Capital Planning Commission, is a frequent contributor to *ARCHITECTUREDC.*

G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA ("Declaration of Independence" and "Architecture for Art's Sake") is senior vice president and curator at the **National Building Museum.** He is the editor of *ARCHITECTUREDC.*

Ronald O'Rourke ("Designs to Whet the Appetite") is a regular contributor to *ARCHITECTUREDC.* His father, Jack O'Rourke, was an architect in San Francisco for more than four decades.

Janet Rankin ("Bloo Toothsome") is a director with **Lehman Smith McLeish.**

Additional Credits

In the Summer 2011 issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC,* the project credits for Fernhill (page 27) should have included **Mehrdad Rahbar, AIA,** and **Kevin Shertz, AIA,** as project architects.

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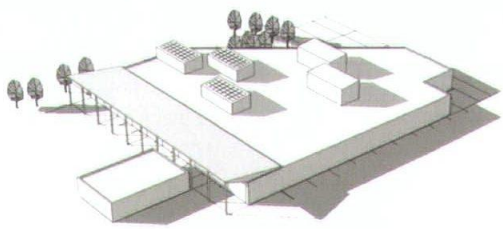






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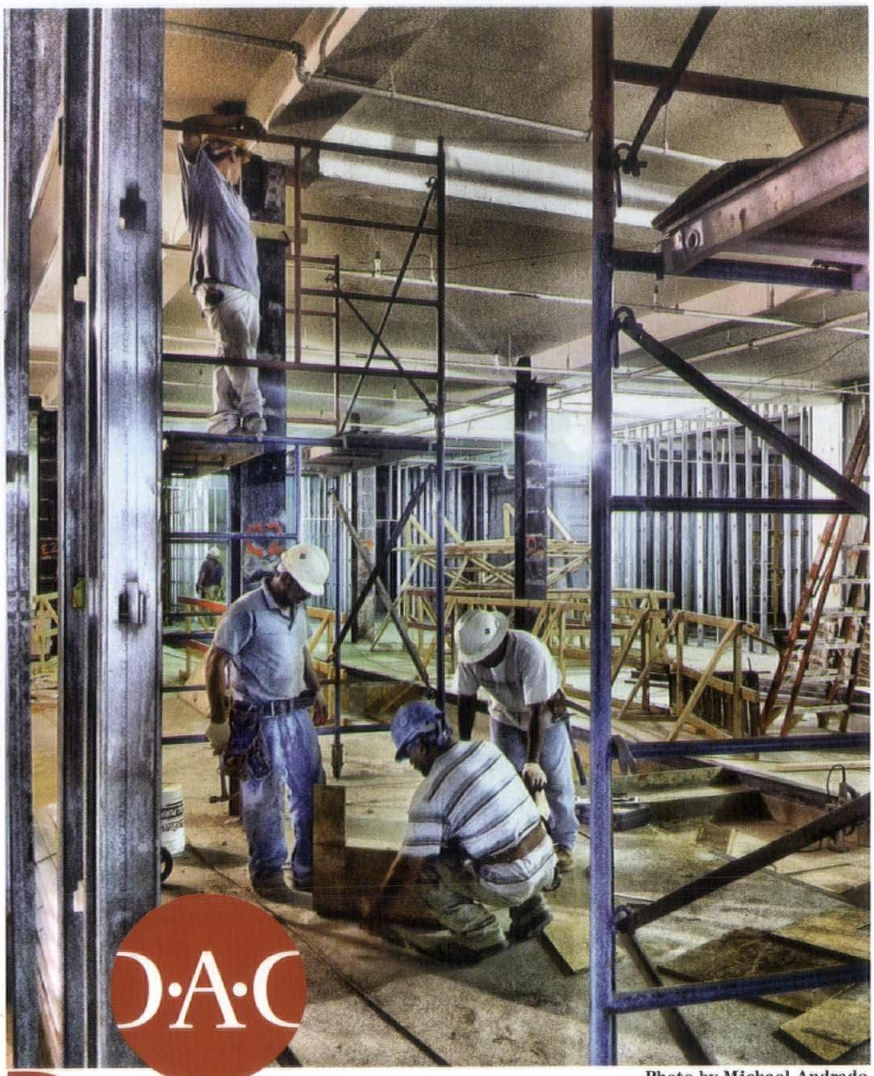


Photo by Michael Andrade

Progress on the DAC

by Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA

Construction of the new District Architecture Center (DAC)—located at 421 7th Street, NW, in the Penn Quarter area—is now under way.

Work began with demolition and clearing of the space. Workers then cut through the floor to create the glass box that will visually connect the facility's two levels. The remaining flooring was then prepared for its new concrete surface. Once that new surface is in place, the buildout of the rest of the facility will occur quickly.

We encourage you to visit the construction site regularly to see architecture in progress. Look in through the front doors, which have been left uncovered for visitors, and track how **Sigal Construction** is turning **Hickok Cole Architects'** design for DAC into reality. You can also watch the Center take shape at *http://aiadc.tumblr.com.*

District Architecture Center

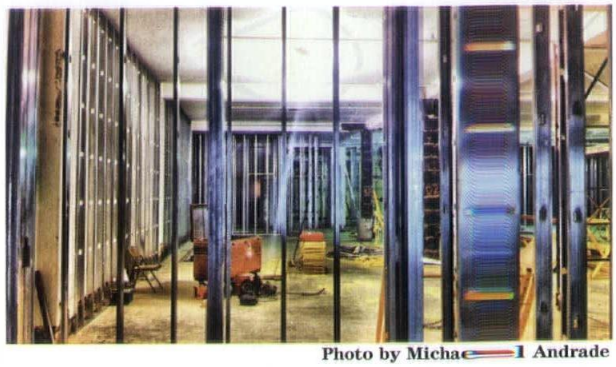


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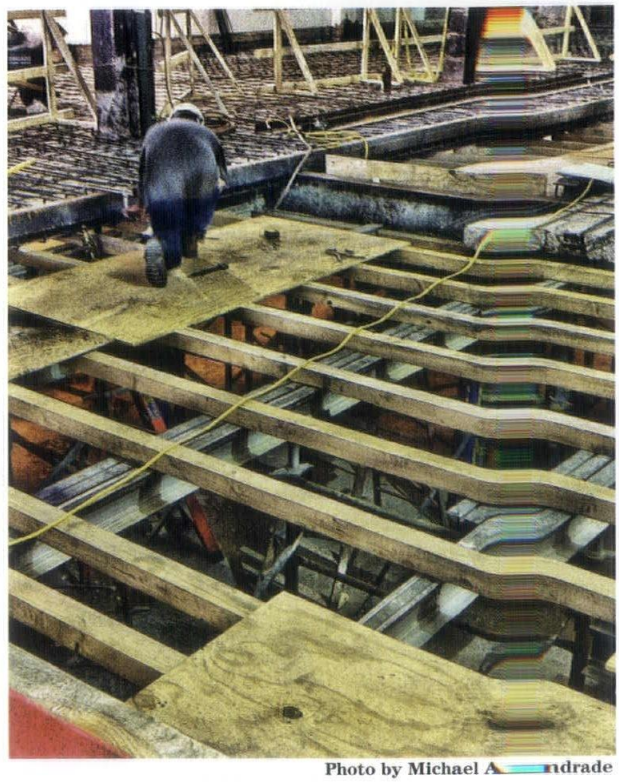
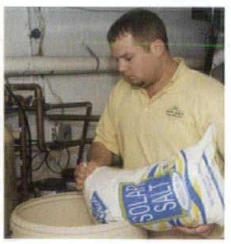


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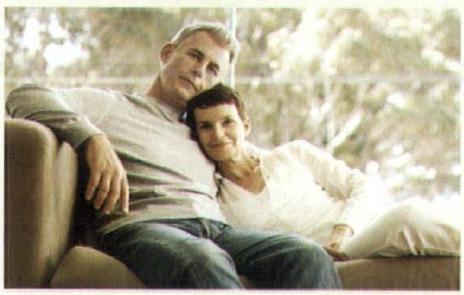
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Dining area at Mandu. Photo © Paul Burk Photography

Designs to Whet the Appetite:

Evocative Materials and Colors Distinguish Three Local Eateries

by Ronald O'Rourke

Designing a restaurant offers an architect an opportunity to use materials and colors in sophisticated combinations for the purpose of evoking in customers' minds memories, imaginations, and appetites consistent with the restaurateur's vision. The challenge for the architect is to do this in a measured and controlled manner so that the space doesn't become a phony-looking stage set. These three new projects by DC-area architects—two restaurants in downtown Washington, and a cupcake shop in the Reston Town Center—employ skillful mixes of materials and colors to achieve their clients' goals.

Project: Mandu, Washington, DC

Architects: **GrizForm Design Architects**
MEP Engineers: **Metropolitan Consulting Engineers**
Structural Engineers: **Structura**
Kitchen Designers: **JRS Associates**
General Contractor: **Herman/Stewart Construction**





Tall dining table at Mandu. **Photo © Paul Burk Photography**



Entrance to Mandu. **Photo © Paul Burk Photography**

Mandu: Evoking Korean Tradition in a Contemporary Space

When chef Yesoon Lee and her two children, Jean and Danny, decided to open a second branch of Mandu, their successful Korean restaurant, they turned to **GrizForm Design Architects** to create their new space. The original Mandu, located in the Dupont Circle area, opened in 2006. The new branch, which opened in January, is located in the City Vista condominium building at 475 K Street, NW, in the redeveloping Mount Vernon Triangle area. At both locations, the menu focuses on home-style Korean dishes using recipes Lee was originally taught while being raised in Seoul.

GrizForm, established in 2003, has emerged as one of the area's leading firms for restaurant design. Among its many other projects are the Proof restaurant and wine bar covered in the Fall 2008 issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC*, and the Sonoma restaurant and wine bar covered in the Fall 2005 issue.

The goal in designing the new K Street Mandu was to create a space that would evoke Korean culture in a restrained and modern manner, without resorting to design clichés found in many badly designed Asian restaurants.

"Mandu is the creation of a Korean-born and traditionally raised chef and her two American-born and pop-culture-raised children," said **Griz Dwight, AIA**, principal of GrizForm. "Our challenge was to bring their two worlds together to create a contemporary restaurant where traditional Korean dumplings would feel right at home. One specific direction given by our younger clients was 'don't make it too Asian.'"

As is often the case with restaurant design, a key challenge was to fit a lot of function into a small area while retaining a sense of spaciousness for customers.

"The space has a footprint of only 2,300 square feet, so we needed to maximize the use of that area to meet the seating requirement in our client's business plan," Dwight said. The solution was to insert a second level of seating into the high-ceilinged space. "With the addition of the mezzanine dining area, we were able add 40 more seats and give our client the flexibility to hold private parties in an area separated from the main dining room."

The restaurant's most prominent design gesture—a wall of handmade oak "memory boxes" stacked seven rows high—separates the bar and dining room on the main level and extends up to the mezzanine, where it helps to enclose that dining space. (see cover photo)

"We began our research with traditional Korean culture," Dwight said. "Armed with our base knowledge, we set out to reinterpret the elements we came to love. The box wall was modeled after boxes found in Buddhist temples and homes, where they're used for storing prayers and special items."

Another prominent design element—brightly painted carved wooden ducks in various stages of flight that are mounted along the perimeter walls—was inspired by Jean and Danny's memories of growing up near a duck pond. "The ducks are a three-dimensional expression of the delicate birds found throughout traditional Asian décor," Dwight said.

A composite material consisting of contrasting strips of lighter and darker scrap woods runs through the design, beginning as flooring and then extending up the back wall and on to the ceiling. The material, Dwight says, evokes a bamboo forest, although one might also argue its wrap-around use turns the entire restaurant into a giant wooden box for creating new memories of meals shared with family and friends. Additional material choices include a woven fabric applied to the banquette seating to mimic the rattan used in Asian furniture, and modern materials such as concrete and steel.

"The various forms of wood used in the design keep the space warm, while the concrete and steel accents throughout accentuate the contemporary elements of the design," Dwight said. "It's a contemporary space that uses traditional materials, which adds longevity to the design."

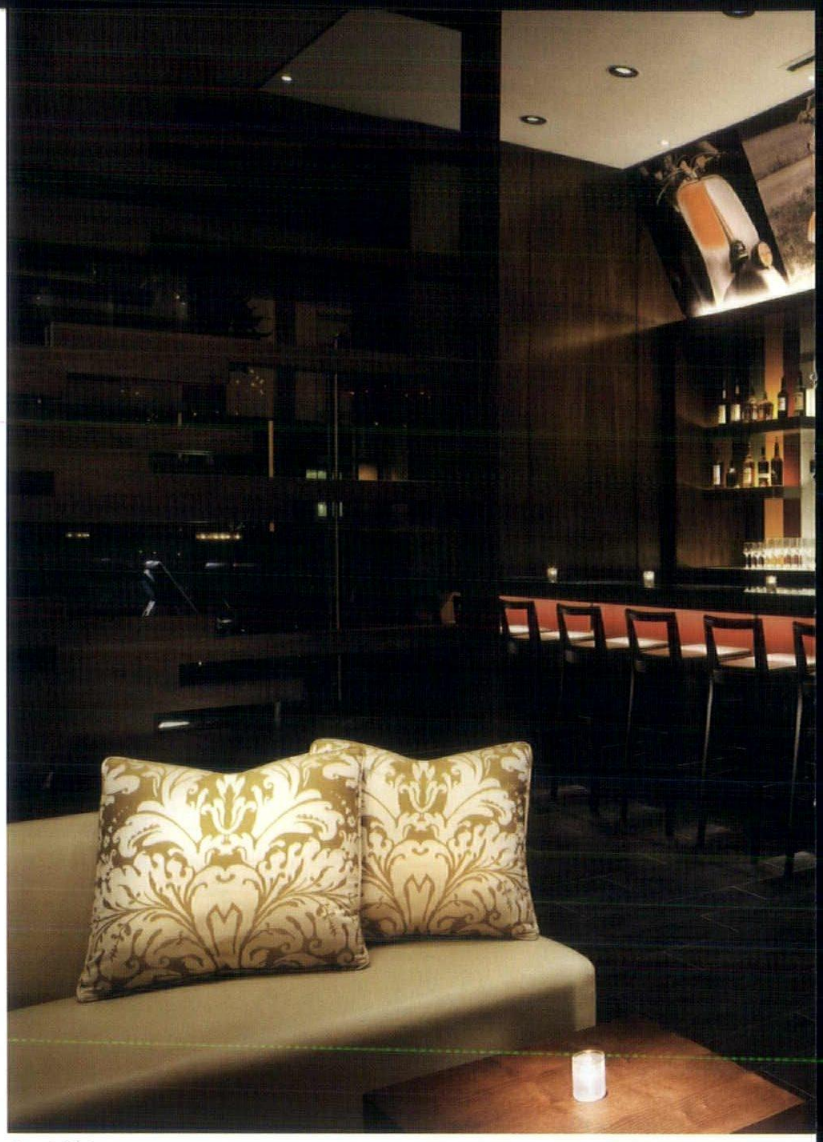
The result is a restaurant that draws a variety of clients, including businessmen, members of the local Korean community, and nearby residents. "In all, the design beckons to the residents of the young and bustling neighborhood, while giving a nod to the old world that is the restaurant's foundation," Dwight said. "The space is equally inviting to the lunch crowd, group diners, or date-night guests."



Dining area at Bibiana. Photo © Greg Powers



Lounge at Bibiana. Photo © Greg Powers



Bar at Bibiana.

Bibiana: Elegance Without Stuffiness

As neighborhoods develop and change, so can the restaurants that serve them. A recent case in point is Bibiana, a new Italian *osteria* located at 1100 New York Avenue, NW, an office building with several retail and restaurant spaces that was built in 1989 around the preserved Art Deco façade of a 1940s-era Greyhound Bus station.

As the building's neighborhood evolved over the last 20 years to include a number of high-end hotels, the mid-market restaurant previously in Bibiana's spot didn't change with it, and eventually languished. When the space was sold, the new owners selected **Raj Barr-Kumar, FAIA, RIBA, IIDA,** principal of **Barr-Kumar Architects Engineers PC,** to design Bibiana.

"The owners wanted to capitalize on the now up-market neighborhood by creating a new restaurant that would attract hotel guests as well as people working in nearby offices," said Barr-Kumar, who has designed more than a dozen Washington-area restaurants. "Their vision was to create a unique dining experience featuring authentic Italian food in a sophisticated setting—to make a space with a refined ambience in keeping with the high-end customer base." The design also needed to provide private dining areas that could accommodate a variety of seating combinations, including large groups.

Project: Bibiana, Washington, DC

Coordinating Architect of Record: **Barr-Kumar Architects Engineers PC**
Interior Architectural Consultants: **ARA Design, UK**
Mechanical Engineers: **JB Wyble & Associates PA**
Food Service Consultant: **Savoy Brown**
Contractor: **Forrester Construction**

The 120-seat restaurant includes a bar in the center and dining rooms to either side. The dining rooms are partially sectioned off to create smaller zones, but sightlines are preserved to maintain the unity of the design and a sense of spaciousness. Glass walls permit one of the dining rooms to be closed off acoustically for meetings without blocking views for other customers. Barr-Kumar lowered the space's high ceiling to make the dining areas more intimate, to reduce summer heat gain from the tall, south-facing windows, and to create an overhead area for hiding new mechanical systems.



Photo © Greg Powers

Dark wood flooring and tabletops establish a rich foundation tone that is then lightened with glass panels and details in brushed aluminum and stainless steel. The bar counter's glowing red front is made from glass backed by a red-painted surface, and is intended to suggest Murano glass, Barr-Kumar says. The somewhat bright, vertical stripes of color at the back of the bar can be read as a take on Venetian design.

But these are subtle references to Italian culture, and the mix of colors is otherwise a warm combination of muted gold, brown, and beige tones. The green, white, and red flag scheme is avoided, and the only overt visual cues that this is an Italian restaurant are large-format black-and-white photos of buildings, scooters, and other details that evoke thoughts of Italy in the optimistic postwar years—the Italy of Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck in *Roman Holiday,* or of Bill Cosby and Robert Culp in certain episodes of *I Spy*.

The complex but carefully coordinated mix of materials and colors creates a space that is rich but not stuffy or overbearing—a white tablecloth restaurant without the tablecloths, you might say. Although the large-format photos introduce a nostalgic note, the overall scheme reads as a refined, 21st-century space that the owners characterize as "high-style Milano design." It's a perfect setting for a business lunch or an elegant, butnot overly formal dinner.

"The success of the restaurant," Barr-Kumar says, "owes much to the vision of the owner and his management technique, which includes hiring name chefs to create a delectable menu, and attentive staff to ensure a smooth dining experience." But it's also partly due, he says, to the design of the space, which creates "an overall ambience that pampers the senses."

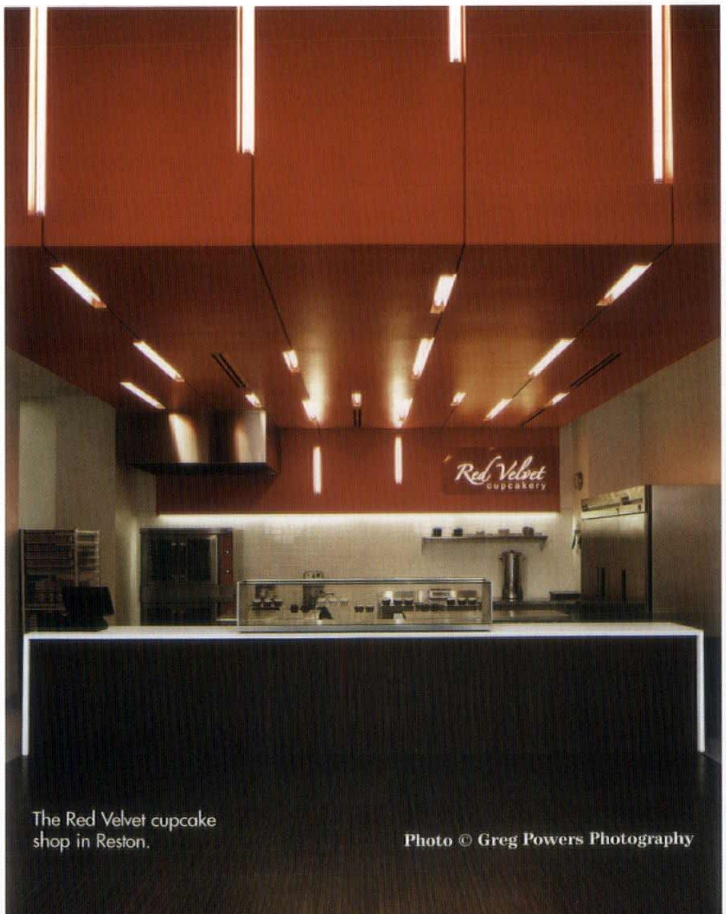
Red Velvet: A Well-Baked Design With Icing on Top

More than a decade after it began, the cupcake craze continues—as does the competition among cupcake bakers for market share. In the battle for customers, having a tasty product is paramount, of course. And being the subject of a cable TV reality show doesn't hurt either.

But good store design is also important: buying and eating a cupcake—the most cheerful of all food items—is a light-hearted experience that draws on nostalgic memories of childhood and simpler times. A store design that employs color and texture skillfully to evoke these feelings can help attract new customers and turn them into regulars.

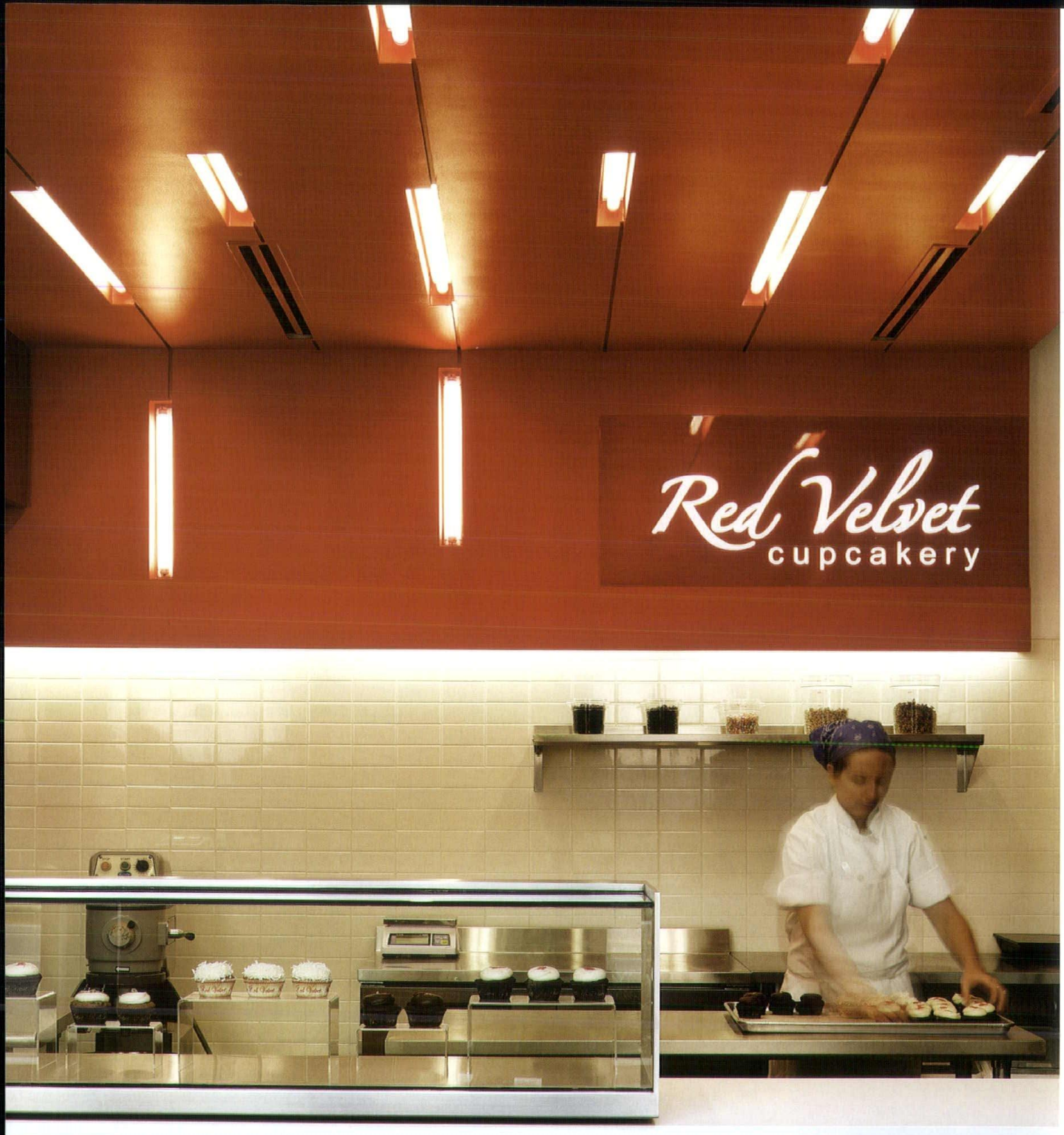
The Red Velvet cupcake chain's first area store, located in Washington's Penn Quarter district, is a functional but tiny retail space. For the chain's next local outlet, Red Velvet's owner wanted something bigger.

"With the success they've been having [at the Penn Quarter shop], the owner decided to open a store in the Reston Town Center as the official flagship outlet," said **Janet Bloomberg, AIA,** a principal of **KUBE Architecture.** "In terms of design, we were given relative freedom, with the only real owner requirement being that the



The Red Velvet cupcake shop in Reston.

Photo © Greg Powers Photography

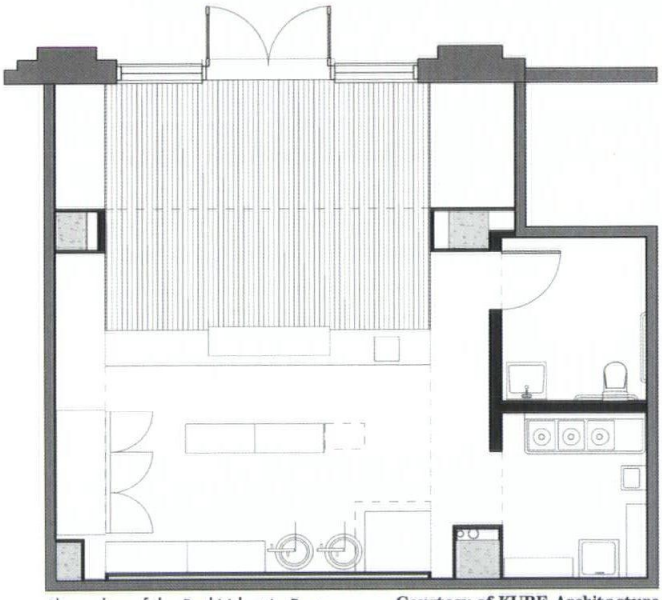


The open food preparation area at Red Velvet.

Photo © Greg Powers Photography



-up of the ceiling at Red Velvet. **Photo © Greg Powers Photography**



Floor plan of the Red Velvet in Reston. **Courtesy of KUBE Architecture**

making of the cupcakes should be on display to the customers, rather than hidden away in back. He wanted to show that process as an attraction."

Although the owner wanted a flagship facility, he didn't have money to burn.

"The main constraint was cost," Bloomberg said. "This project was done on a very limited budget, so we had to plan very carefully how to weave function and design together creatively. Also, the space—though bigger than the 7th Street location—was still limited, so we had to squeeze a lot in while maintaining order and simplicity."

Achieving a high-impact design at modest cost in a takeaway food shop is a familiar challenge for KUBE—the firm did something similar, for example, in its award-winning design for the Dupont Circle Tangysweet yogurt shop, which was featured in both the Fall 2008 and Winter 2008 issues of *ARCHITECTUREDC*.

KUBE's design for the Reston Red Velvet is dominated by two strong colors—the chain's trademark red, which starts on the ceiling and continues down the back wall, and a dark wood tone, reminiscent of chocolate, that starts on the floor and continues up the front of the sales counter.

"The design strategy was to create two distinct areas—the customer area in front, and the preparation area in back," Bloomberg explained. "These are linked by the sales counter, which serves as a transition zone, both functionally and visually. The customer area is very colorful, while the preparation area is glossy white, representing the hygiene of food preparation, and also serving as a simple backdrop for the cupcake preparation, which is very colorful with icings and toppings. Stainless steel is also very prevalent in the space, with the kitchen equipment serving as a feature, as well as the custom stainless steel and glass cupcake case."

Although the overall design is quite modern, the back area's combination of red-painted surfaces, white tiles, and stainless steel equipment simultaneously evokes thoughts of 1950s diners and drive-ins. The cursively lettered Red Velvet logo, which KUBE also designed, adds to the '50s-era vibe while also suggesting piped cupcake icing.

But it's another part of the design that Bloomberg thinks is particularly noteworthy.

"I think the layered ceiling is the most [unusual] design feature, and it provides a memorable character to the space," she said. "The ceiling's layered red color serves as an architectural icing, starting with a very three-dimensional slatted design in front that consists of painted MDF [medium-density fiberboard] panels suspended with stainless steel cables, so that they seem to float. The rest of the ceiling is painted drywall, with recessed coves for fluorescent lights that are placed randomly as 'sprinkles' on the ceiling—again an architectural metaphor for the icing on a cupcake. The three-dimensionality of this ceiling really pulls in the customer and frames the space with color."

As stated before in this magazine, good design is good business. "The owner is thrilled with our design, and feels it has contributed to the shop's success," Bloomberg said. "The design is simple and clean, so the flow of customers in and out works well, but they're intrigued with the design and come in to see more. Also, the owner feels we successfully branded the space, especially with the integration of signage into the design. He didn't imagine we could execute such a unique and creative design within his budgetary constraints."

Project: Red Velvet, Reston, VA

Architects: **KUBE architecture**
MEP Engineers: **D2 Engineering**
General Contractor: **Winmar Construction**

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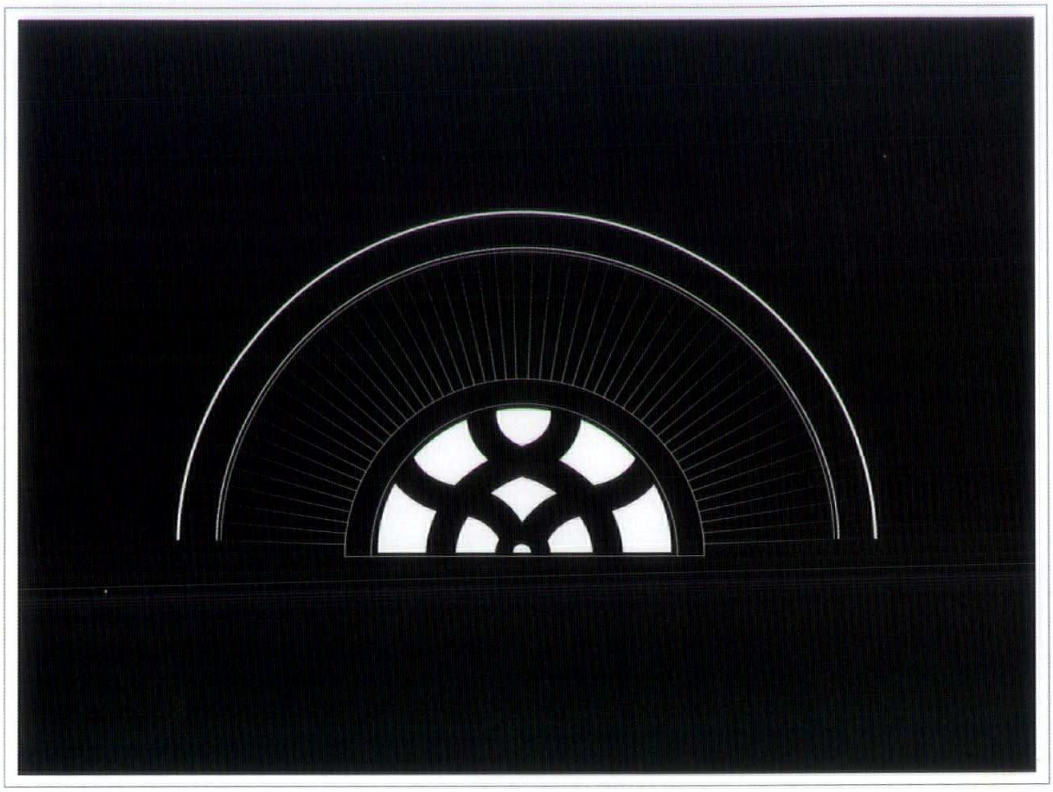
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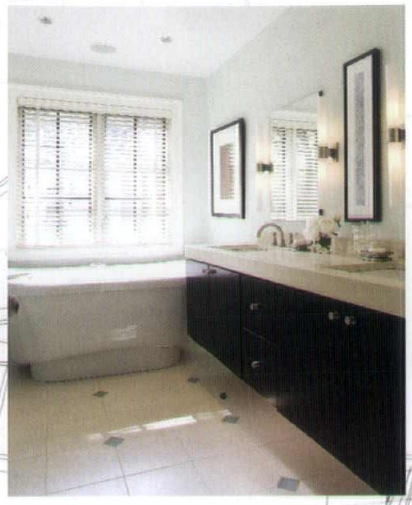


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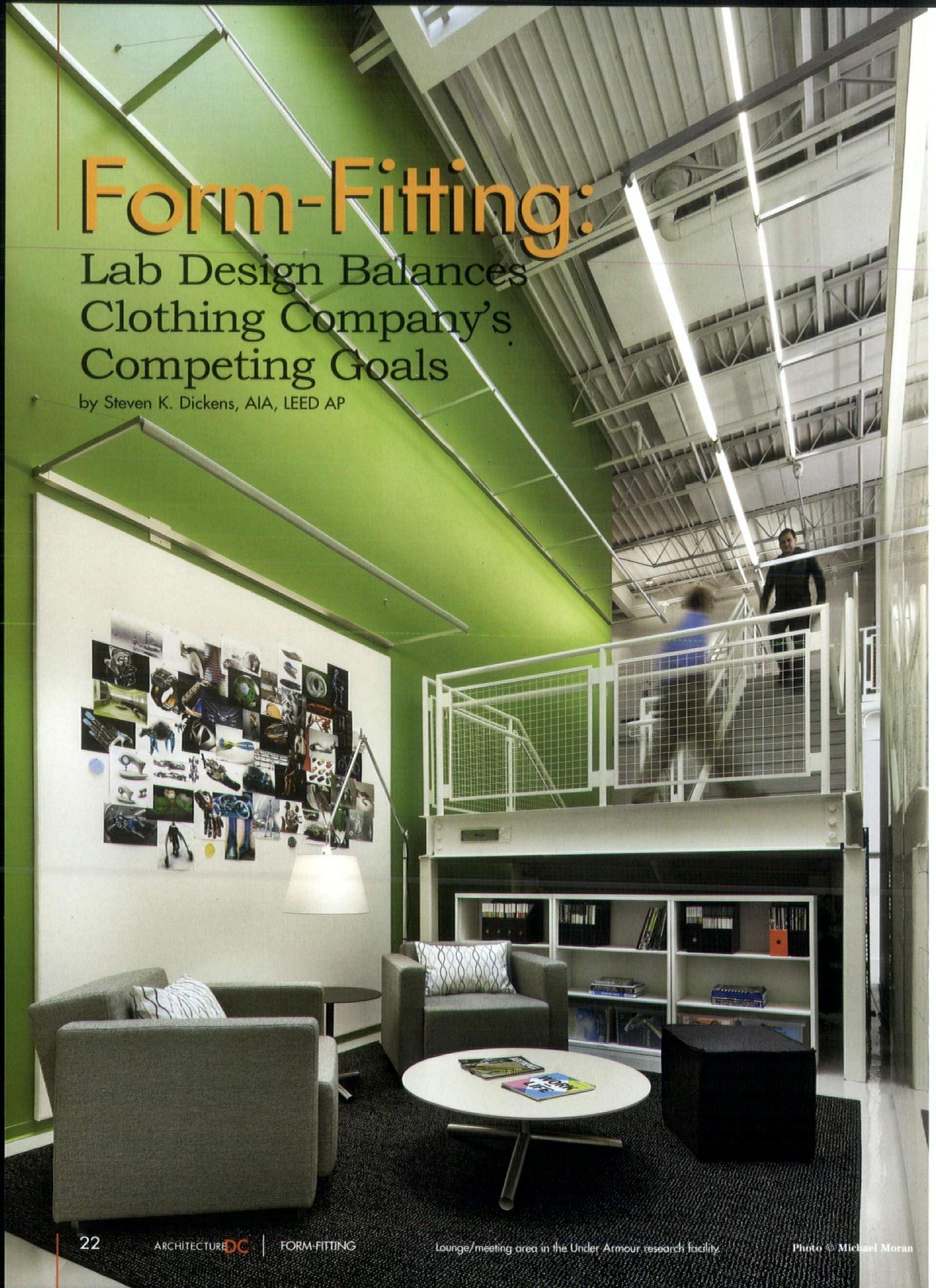
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Form-Fitting:

Lab Design Balances Clothing Company's Competing Goals

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP



Lounge/meeting area in the Under Armour research facility.

Photo © Michael Moran

In 1996, Kevin Plank, a former University of Maryland football player, had an innovative idea: if one were to use the fabric of compression shorts for athletic shirts, the days of sweat-soaked jerseys could be over, since the fabric wicks away and evaporates the moisture. With modest personal investment and a US Small Business Loan, he and a UM teammate founded a company, initially operated from Plank's grandmother's DC basement, to make and promote the product.

That single innovation spawned, in a short 15 years, the multinational sports apparel company Under Armour. Nowadays, Under Armour sells a huge volume of sporty apparel to non-athletes and amateur athletes for whom the highest levels of performance are perhaps not completely relevant. Nevertheless, the company's brand remains firmly tethered to the elite levels of athletic performance, with its products worn by top professional and collegiate athletes. The fitness blogger John Phung writes that Under Armour is a "growing force and a fierce competitor" that is "constantly raising the bar." It can do so only by means of never-ending innovation.

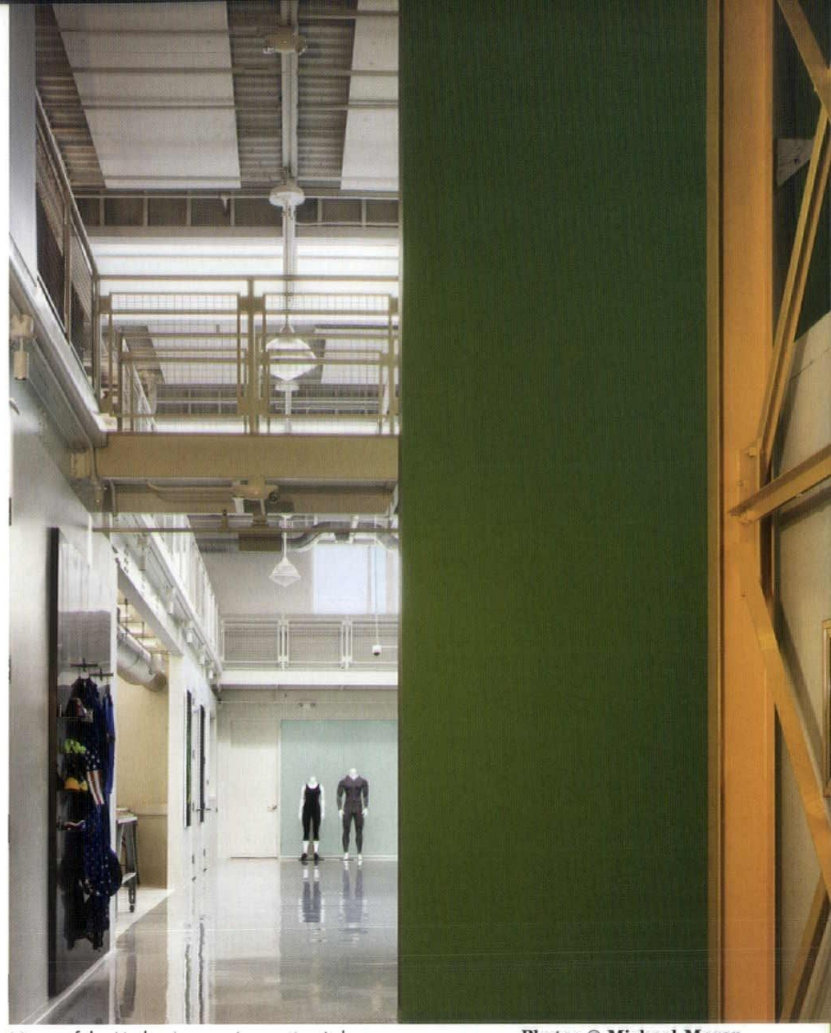
In 2010, the company decided to formalize its product development wing by creating an "Innovation Lab" at its headquarters, which is in Tide Point, a repurposed Proctor & Gamble factory on the Baltimore waterfront. Under Armour had purchased an adjacent 140,000-square-foot warehouse and converted most of that space to employee amenities such as a half-court basketball arena, café, and concierge service.

A 9,000-square-foot space was set aside for the new Innovation Lab, and—showing that its pursuit of excellence isn't limited to sportswear—the company held an invited, paid design competition among four architectural firms for the plum commission. The firms had only one week to come up with a presentation.

"I think, in the end, our design solution spoke to them the most in terms of meeting their needs," opines **James S. Camp, AIA, LEED AP,** managing director of Gensler and project director for the Under Armour facility. But these *needs* were much more than programmatic. Of course, Gensler provided functional office areas, testing rooms, fabrication areas, and the like. And the look—a clean, mostly white, loft-style space with occasional bursts of color accentuating interesting architectural features of the warehouse—ideally conveys the image of an "Innovation Lab." Subtler, yet equally critical, was the need to balance secrecy and showmanship. Under Armour wants the world to know that it is developing fantastic new things, but at the same time, the actual products and innovations are strictly top secret. There are also consultants (from within the company and outside) who must be privy to a portion of the secrets, but from whom the bigger picture is often hidden. The need to accommodate this range of levels of confidentiality, and the delicate friction thus created, were at the center of Gensler's design.

Project: Under Armour Innovation Lab, Baltimore, MD

Architects: **Gensler**
Structural, Mechanical, and Plumbing Engineers: **Morris & Ritchie Associates**
Electrical Engineers: **Telegent Engineering**
Lighting: **Bliss Fasman**
Audio-visual: **Nelson White Systems, Inc.**
General Contractor: **Turner Construction Company**



Views of the Under Armour Innovation Lab. **Photos © Michael Moran**



The Innovation Lab's entrance illustrates this balance. Gensler completely reworked the pre-existing, bland, almost windowless warehouse to provide exterior identity for the facility. Under Armour's instantly recognizable logotype is positioned atop a red vertical panel. Yet the signage on the simple entrance canopy doesn't say "Innovation Lab," but rather "Make All Athletes Better," a summary of the company's mission statement. The entry itself has a vascular scanner in lieu of a cardkey reader (or a hopelessly passé doorbell). Thus the entrance sequence neatly introduces to the visitor the triplet goals of secrecy, high-tech wonder, and mission branding.

The acute visitor might also notice that, although Gensler added significant areas of windows to introduce natural light, the windows and spaces behind them are strategically coordinated to provide no more than a glimpse of the actual interior workings. Inside, a loft-like wonderland of mysterious spaces emerges. At the center, defined by a black space frame, is the "motion-capture space," a large, flexible area where cameras and sensors record and assess athletes running, jumping, swinging golf clubs, and the like. The data are transmitted to workstations in a mezzanine level overlooking the central space yet out of sight for anyone except the staff and credentialed collaborators.

In a similar vein, visitors might notice a wide, tall, warehouse-type storage rack, with a ladder for access and exposed bins. These bins contain swaths of fabrics, project notes, mockups, and who-knows-what-else related to Innovation Lab projects. The storage unit is industrial-chic, standing out against the white walls, and it demonstrates that there are lots of ongoing projects. But of course the bins are out of reach and their contents hidden.

Also within the central, two-story space, arrayed around the motion-capture area and sharing the light from two large, new skylights, are meeting tables of a variety of sizes, which are easily reconfigured; a kitchen with an island bar and stools; and groupings of lounge furniture on rugs, casually arranged but aimed at whiteboards. These are the informal gathering spaces crucial to the spontaneous cross-pollination that marks the modern innovation process. Beyond are more specialized laboratories, including an "environmental lab" in which the full range of weather conditions, from bitter cold to hot and humid to actually raining, can be created to test the products. Glimpses of some of these labs can be had from the central space, but the particulars remain by invitation only.

"The innovation team has the unique responsibility of pushing the boundaries, of setting Under Armour oceans away from its competitors," notes Camp. According to Camp, the entire design period, from the release of the competition to completion of contract documents, was less than 18 weeks, a breathtakingly quick time for a project of this complexity and size. "By doing the design competition, the company started with a well-developed vision which allowed us to move fast and take the project further."

Construction was completed for a February 2011 move-in. The schedule was set by corporate goals, confidential but possibly related to Under Armour's announcement, shortly thereafter, of the new E39 compression shirt, which provides instant feedback, via wireless transmission, of an athlete's breathing rate, heart rate, body temperature, and acceleration. An adaptation of similar military applications, the E39 could revolutionize not only athletic training but also sports broadcasting, since data could be instantly delivered and analyzed.

The E39, of course, was developed prior to the Innovation Lab. In fact, ironically, it partially obsoletes portions of the lab, since it collects performance data in the actual environmental conditions of the field or court. However, the Innovation Lab was used as a backdrop in a promotional video (viewable on YouTube) for the E39, such that from a branding perspective, the two are fused. It's difficult *not* to expect new great things to emerge from the facility, which so deftly balances the client's simultaneous goals of showing off and keeping quiet.



Entrance to the Under Armour Innovation Lab.

Photos © Michael Moran

The "motion-capture" space in the Innovation Lab.

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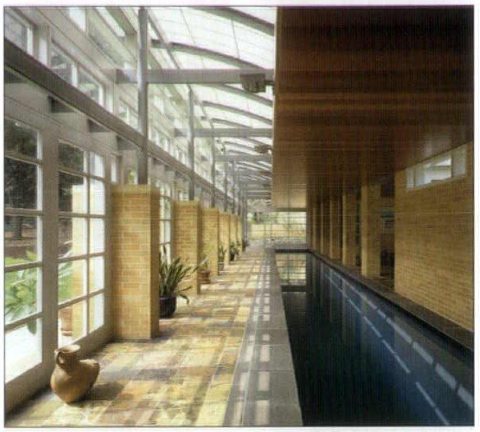
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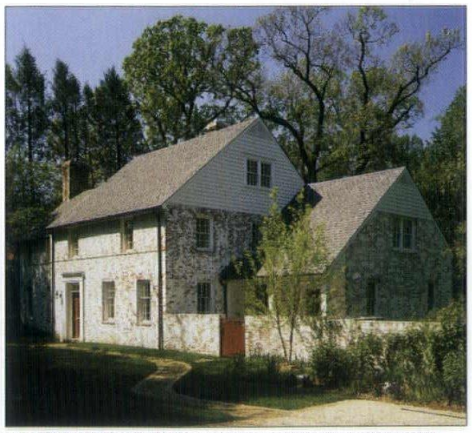
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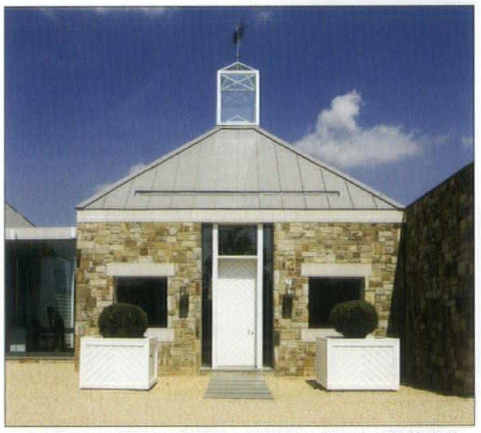
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A treatment room at Bloo Dental.



Photo © Geoffrey Hodgdon

Bloo Toothsome:

Relax, It's a Dentist's Office

by Janet B. Rankin

It's hard to believe that one could associate the often-stressful experience of going to the dentist with an appealing, even soothing environment. But at Bloo Dental, a family practice in Ashburn, Virginia, the pervasive ambiance is more akin to that of a boutique hotel than a traditional medical office.

To serve a sophisticated clientele—and workers—who are increasingly aware of their physical surroundings, medical practitioners are beginning to recognize that thoughtfully designed office space can have a positive effect both on their patients and on their business.

Offices that reflect the personality of the doctor and the nature of the practice are still far from the norm. Yet **FORMA Design,** led by principal **Andreas Charalambous, AIA, IIDA,** has completed more than a dozen such expressive medical and dental offices since the firm's initial project, a periodontist's office, in 1995. Charalambous educates his clients on possibilities, asking questions that help to define identity: Who are you as a doctor? What type of clients do you want to attract? What sets you apart? What makes you unique?

For dentist Haress Rahim, creating a family practice, in a setting where both children and adults would feel comfortable, was the driving force behind the design. Divided by a "spine" of lab and X-ray equipment, the 2,500-square-foot office has distinct zones for children and adults. While adults are treated in more traditional private rooms, kids can have their teeth cleaned in an open hygiene room, complete with comfortable seating within the room for Mom or Dad. A coffee bar helps adults pass the time while waiting, and children can watch their favorite TV shows.

Waiting area at Bloo Dental, with custom light fixtures.



Project: Bloo Dental, Ashburn, VA

Architects: **FORMA Design, Inc.**
Engineers: **CFR Engineering**
Medical Equipment: **Bob Middledorf, Henry Schein**
General Contractor: **HBW Group Construction**



Photo © Geoffrey Hodgdon

While the plan is compact, rational, and efficient, the execution of detail is anything but. In addition to his professional passions, Rahim loves the ocean; he is an enthusiastic underwater diver and is inspired by anything blue. Blue water became the inspiration for the branding of the practice and the design of the space. The sensuous-sounding "Bloo"—the phonetic pronunciation for the color blue—is the perfect introduction to the space.

The predominant initial impression comes from curved, white laminate walls, reminiscent of the crest of a wave, which hug a blue, vinyl-clad bench on either side of the entry door. A similar curve embraces the reception desk. A custom-designed graphic, in a fluid, watery blue, accents walls, glass privacy screens, and the reception desk. The image suggests the constant movement of the sea; indeed, a slow-moving version is projected on the reception area wall, evoking a languid, relaxing underwater world.

Throughout the space, the ever-present white surfaces change in texture. Glossy, wave-like curves give way to textured wall panels with a seed pod-like pattern. A textured rubber tile floor provides a hygienic walking plane, while amoeba-shaped lighting fixtures enliven the ceiling.

It's a safe bet that patients coming to this dental office will sit back, relax, and say, "Ahhhhh."



A corridor within the dental office. **Photo © Geoffrey Hodgdon**



Reception desk. **Photo © Geoffrey Hodgdon**

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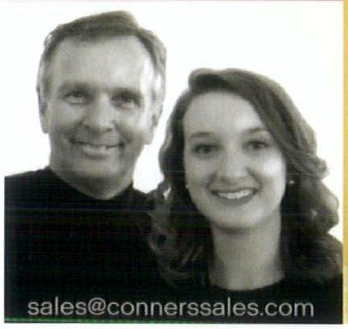
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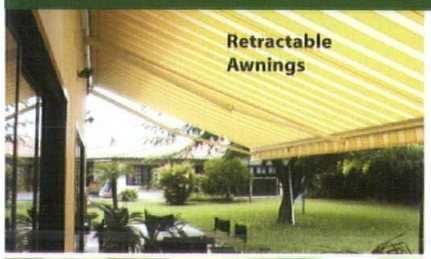


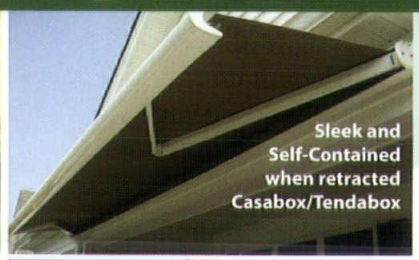
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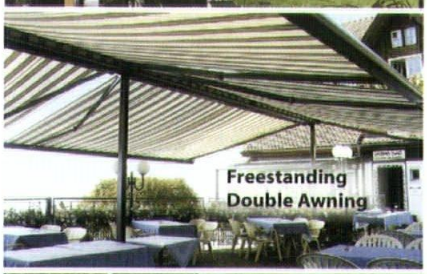


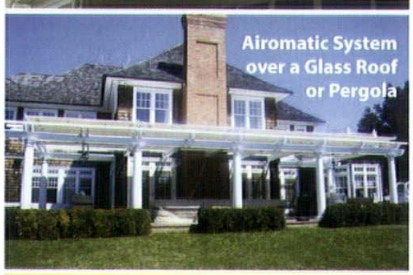
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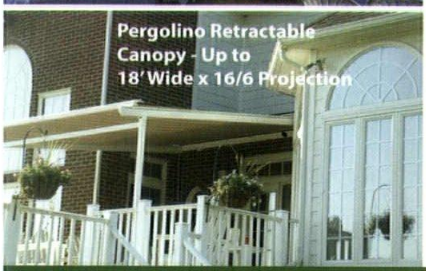
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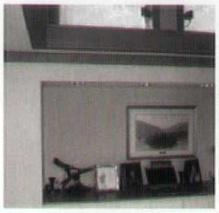
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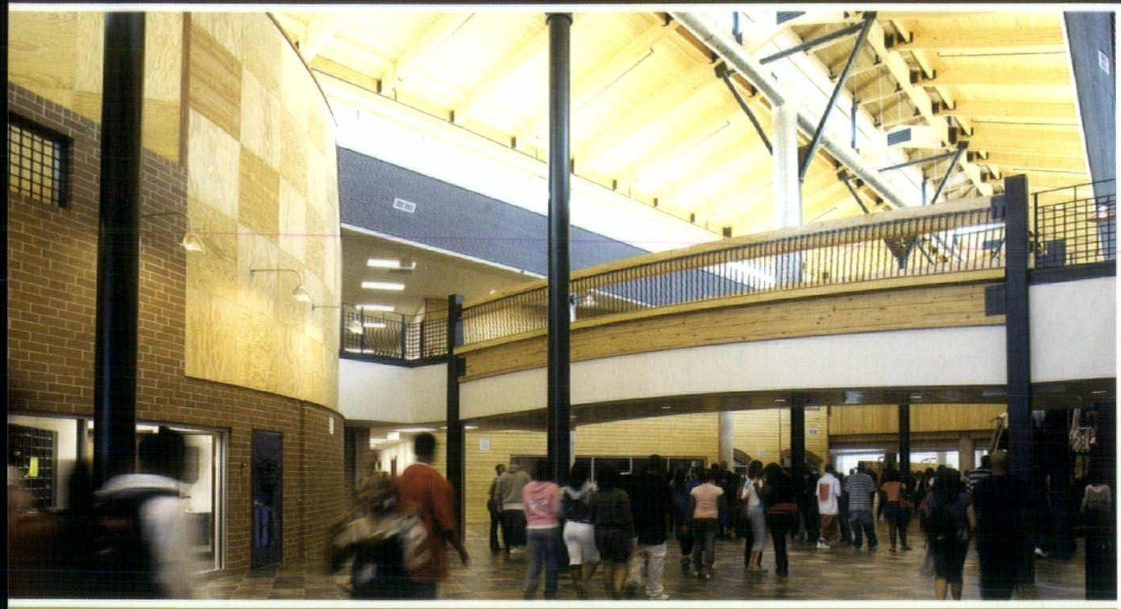
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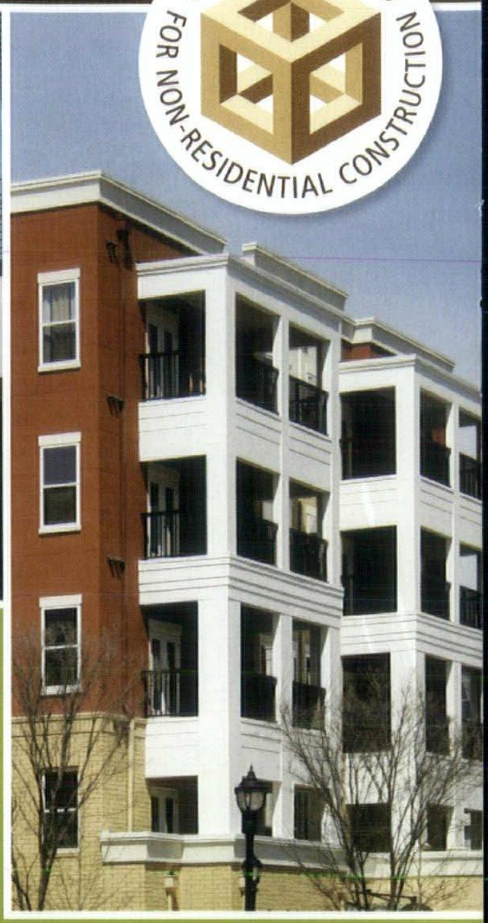
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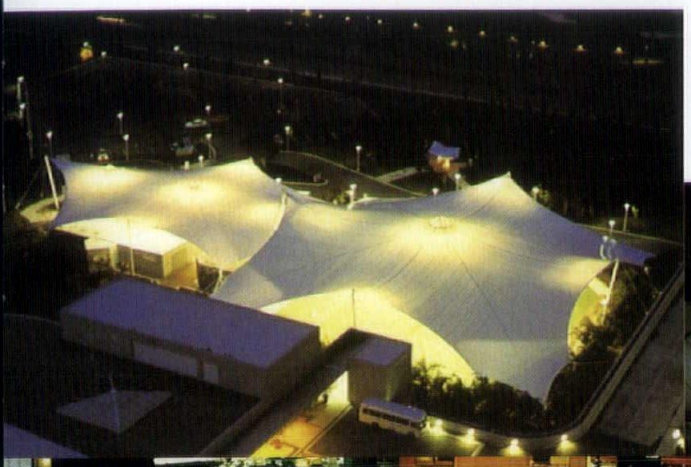
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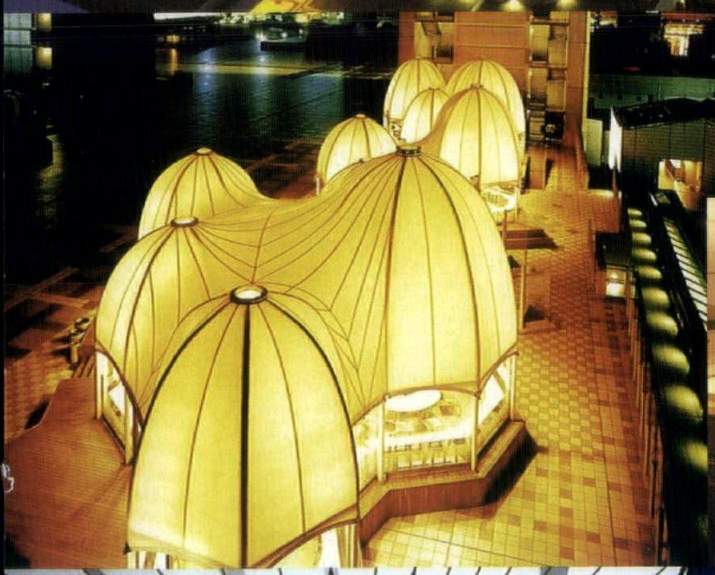
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Declaration of Independence:

Renovated Row Expresses the Ethos of a Small Bank

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

The public banking area at Independence Bank's new corporate headquarters.

Independence Bank is a small, local bank founded by African Americans in 1968 with the goal of serving customers whose financial needs were not being met by mainstream institutions. The bank's name may sound like a typical, vaguely patriotic corporate trope, but in this case, it was chosen to express the institution's autonomy, as well as its goal of helping patrons achieve economic freedom. Independence has consistently eschewed glitzy offices, expensive ad campaigns, and other trappings of the megabanks that now dominate the financial industry.

In 2009, the bank moved its main office from Connecticut Avenue, in the city's central business district, to the corner of 9th and N Streets, NW, in Shaw, a historically African American residential neighborhood that is now undergoing rapid gentrification. The site, directly across from the Washington Convention Center, consisted of five adjacent brick buildings that originally accommodated stores on the ground floor and apartments above. The low-rise structures date from the late 19th century, and recall the days when 9th Street was a secondary but still important commercial corridor.

Independence hired **Andrulis Janezich Architects** (AJA) to oversee the conversion of this quintet of historic buildings into a modern corporate headquarters. "This wasn't a cookie-cutter bank," noted principal **Anton Janezich, AIA,** "and there wasn't an [overriding] corporate identity we had to drive home." That freedom allowed the architects to be "sort of impulsive" in their design process, responding to new discoveries during the demolition of the existing interiors and sometimes working intuitively to find the right balance between old and new elements.

For instance, both the architects and the bank agreed with the DC Historic Preservation Review Board that the masonry bearing walls dividing the buildings should be retained wherever possible. At the same time, the client wanted an open, airy office creating a perception of corporate transparency—a critical concern in the wake of the recent financial crisis that greatly damaged the image of the banking industry. To achieve both ends, AJA developed a floor plan that judiciously inserts new elements into the existing structural bays, which are connected by unframed, rectangular openings in the



Exterior view, showi
restored storefront w



to by Kun Zhang, Assoc. AIA, and
AJArchitects/Dimension Images



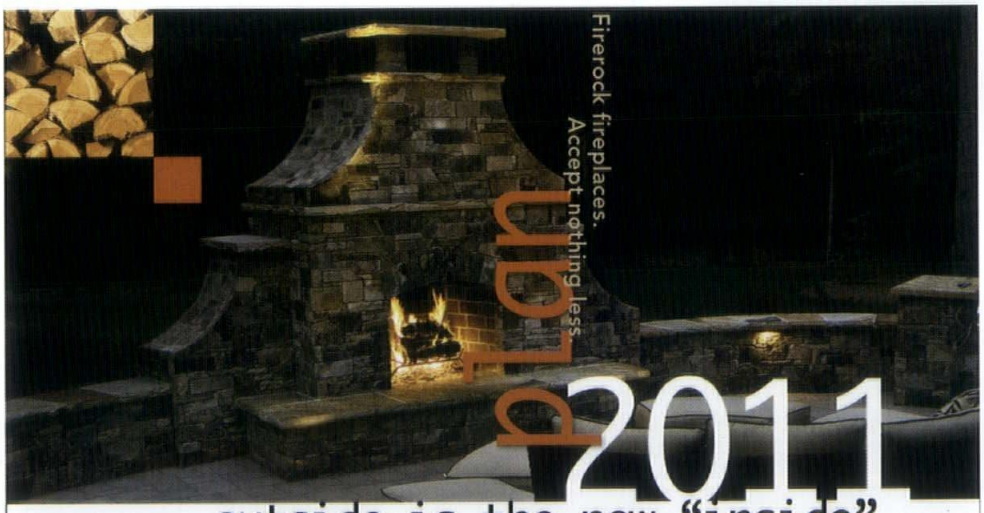
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brick walls. One important organizational device is only subtly evident in photographs, but becomes quite clear in the reflected ceiling plan: a U-shaped grid of fluorescent lights that weaves together all of the spaces. The interior is uniformly bright, thanks to the large, restored bay windows that admit plenty of natural light, combined with white finishes and the open layout.

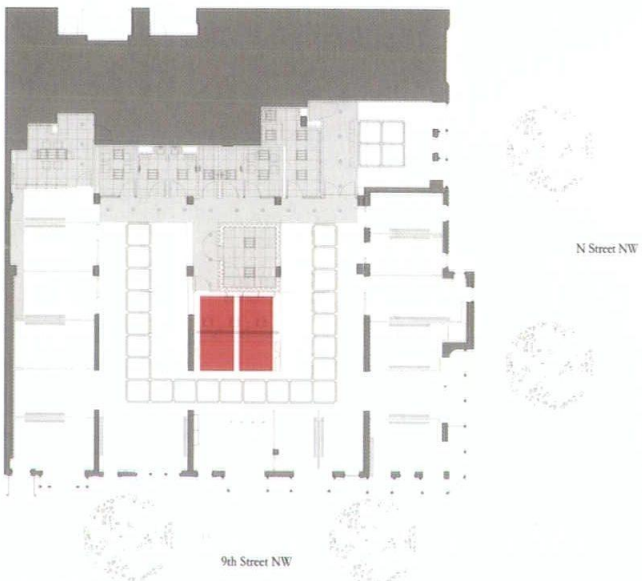
The finished space derives visual interest from the contrast between the warm color and rough texture of the exposed brick walls and the smooth, white surfaces of the furnishings, built-ins, and other insertions. The architects incorporated a very limited number of visual accents, which mediate between the old brick and the new white surfaces. A pair of wavy, red panels above the main banking desk recalls the bank's logo, which is itself derived from the flag of the District of Columbia. Just inside the main entrance is a panel of plaster—salvaged during the renovation—bearing the name of the bank and its motto. "As we were working on the demo of the space," said Janezich, "we discovered the plaster and decided it was important to leave it. It was the perfect place to put a statement about the bank."

The apparent clarity of the interior belies the complexity of the project and is a testament to the architects' skill in turning an irregular group of historic buildings into a coherent, elegant corporate office. On a recent, sunny weekend day, a passerby was looking through one of the bay windows. When asked his opinion of the space, he replied, "I thought it was an art gallery. But it's a bank. Go figure."



Meeting space overlooking the corner of 9th and N Streets, NW.

Photo by Kun Zhang, Assoc. AIA, and AJArchitects/Dimension Images

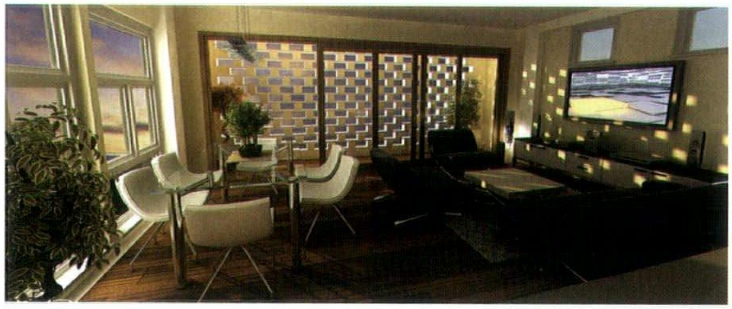


Reflected ceiling plan of the Independence Bank headquarters, showing the U-shaped lighting grid that unifies the space.

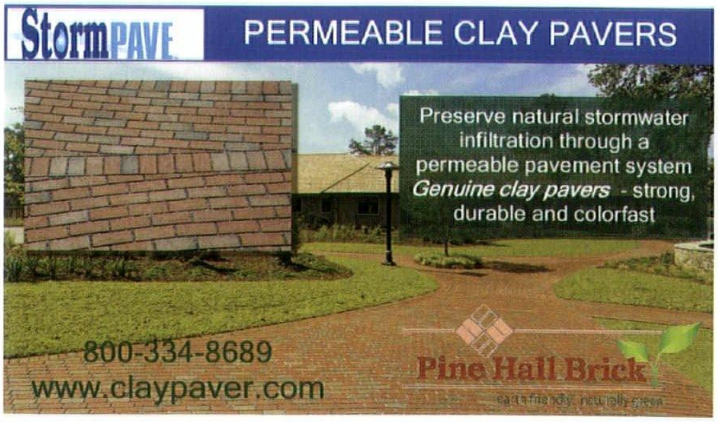
Courtesy of AJArchitects

Project: Independence Bank Corporate Headquarters, Washington, DC

Architects: **Andrulis Janezich Architects, PLLC**
MEP Engineers: **TM/R Engineering, LLC**
Structural Engineers: **HJR Engineers, Ltd.**
General Contractor: **Monarc Construction Inc.**



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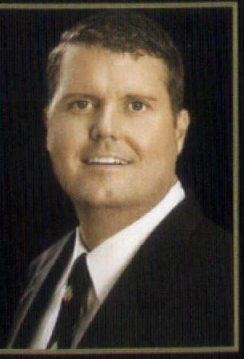


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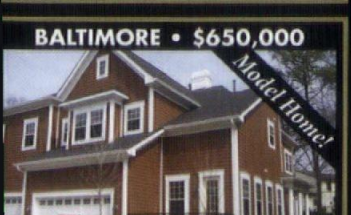
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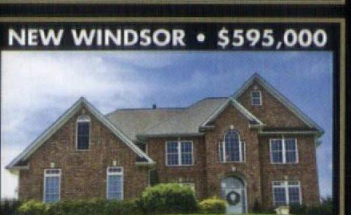
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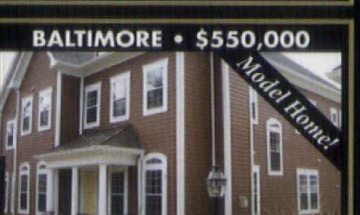
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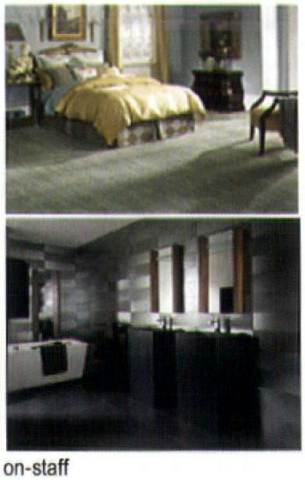


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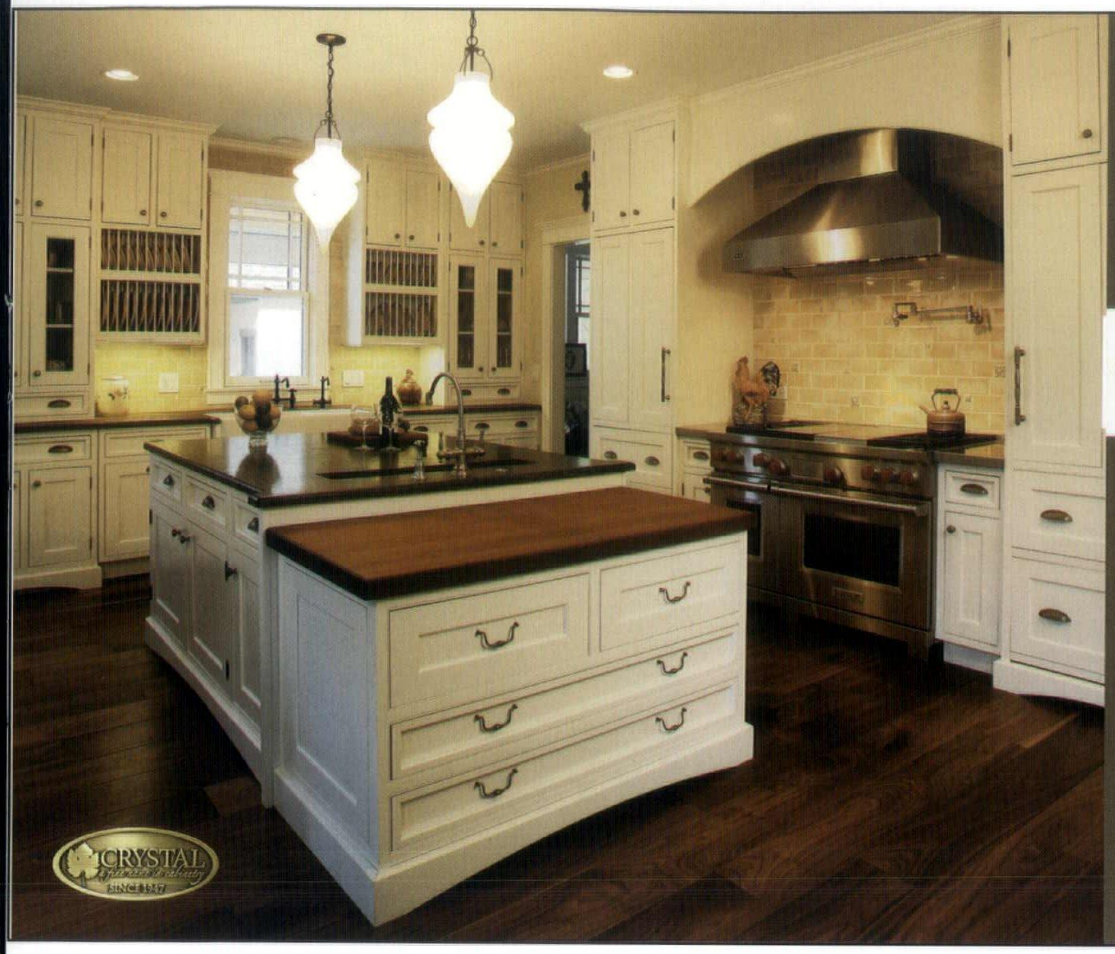




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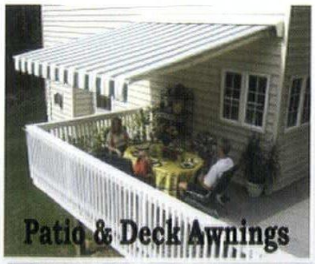
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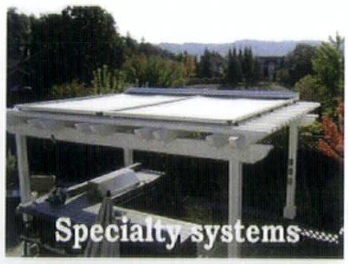
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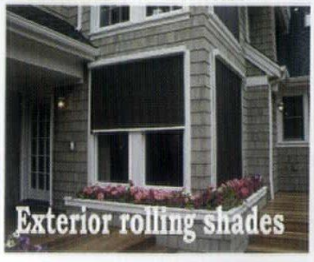
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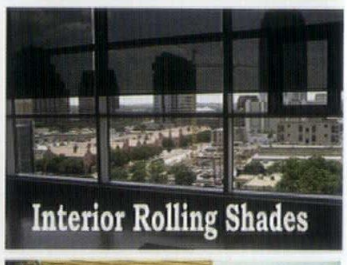
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MOI Encore:

Office Design Signals a Corporate Transformation

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP

View of MOI's new office/showroom, with the reception desk partially visible at left.

Photo © Judy Davis

Sometimes a new office is just a new office, with more modern amenities, maybe with some refinement of work patterns and, one hopes, a style upgrade. But sometimes a new office is an integral part of a company's transformation. Such is the case for the office furniture and workspace systems company formerly known as Maryland Office Interiors, which, following an elaborate rebranding process, emerged with a new name, new office space, a new corporate direction—and a growing list of new clients. Especially with the new office/showroom in downtown D.C., MOI—the new name—has the fresh identity it sought.

STUDIOS Architecture's D.C. office not only designed the new space, but also managed the rebranding process. STUDIOS started with strategic planning sessions in which MOI employees at all levels participated in "visioning" exercises, and interviews with selected staff from MOI's Baltimore, Washington, and Norfolk offices. The overall aim was to position MOI for future growth, specifically in the private and nonprofit client sectors.

The new office/showroom space demonstrates the new brand in every respect. The previous offices were "a cave," according to MOI employees, that clients rarely visited—essentially a back office without a front office or showroom. In contrast, notes STUDIOS associate principal **Marnique Heath, AIA, LEED AP,** "It was vital to MOI that the new space be a working showroom and a place where other people—clients and other people in the contract design industries—would *want* to come."

Accordingly, the second-floor space at the corner of 19th and M Streets, NW, is not at all cave-like: floor-to-ceiling glass walls provide minimal visual barrier between the showroom and the vital urban scene. The showroom draws the energy of the street, while passing pedestrians take note of the furniture and office systems clearly visible behind the glass. "People ask, is it a trendy café?" says MOI marketing director Heather Davis, LEED AP, IIDA. No, but it is a stylish venue for industry events (lectures, meetings, receptions) and a hip, temporary office-away-from-the-office for MOI clients, who are encouraged to "dock" and use the extensive product/material resource center and meeting rooms.



A work table at MOI.

The showroom/office space consists almost entirely of either the base building (windows, concrete columns, slab ceilings, and loft-style exposed service elements) or contract furnishings (workstations, modular glass walls, and the like, by multiple manufacturers that MOI represents). The few drywall partitions are largely covered in millwork or fabric panels. This limited roster of interior elements is purposeful, meant to highlight the contract design products that represent MOI's business.

The office area features a "benching system," that is, interconnected workstations without vertical partitions. This and a fully wireless IT system support constant reformulation of project teams. Brooke Moran, director of architecture and design solutions at MOI, notes that MOI employees "walk the walk" by actually working in the kinds of workspaces which they are promoting to clients. They can personally testify to the improvements in collaboration and team flexibility that these "benching" systems support, as well as steer clients clear from the tripping hazards.

Most of the showroom/office is finished in neutral greys and whites with brilliant green accents. Although the base office building is LEED certified (Core & Shell, Platinum level), and STUDIOS has applied for LEED certification for the showroom (Interiors, Gold or Platinum level), the use of the color green does not allude directly to MOI's commitment to sustainability. Rather, it relates to a different aspect of the rebranding: the color of the logotype. STUDIOS and branding consultant Studio Lin, of New York City, analyzed the logos of competing companies and discovered that almost all trend toward blue or red. No competitors used green, so it was selected as a means of distinguishing MOI.

Green shows up on tabletops, glazed partitions, and fabric panels including the low dividers which separate the two sides of the "benching" workstations. Perhaps most prominently, it appears in the focal element of the office side of the space, the two high-backed freestanding banquettes set amid the workstations, which create a small informal meeting area. These are by Vitra, the Swiss creator of a broad range of high-design items and one of the lines MOI represents. According to Davis, it is the most heavily-used meeting space in the showroom/office, and proves the manufacturer's claim that the high backs provide significant visual and acoustic privacy.

Project: MOI Office/Showroom, Washington, DC

Architects: **STUDIOS Architecture**
Graphics: **Studio Lin**
MEP Engineers: **GHT Limited**
Lighting: **LaFleur Associates**
General Contractor: **Skanska**



Photo © Judy Davis



Meetin g and kitchen area.

Photo © Judy Davis

The showroom or public side of the space also has a focal elem ent, but it's quite different from anything else. The main recep tion desk is torus-shaped with metallic facets. Not only is it no t colored green but, unique among the furnishings, it is a custc m piece. "We wanted it to be a statement about MOI itself," expl ains Heath. Moreover, there was a feeling that it might be show ving too much favoritism to choose a particular manufacturer's proc uct for the focal front reception desk. After all, the manufactu rers' personnel are among the frequent visitors to the space.

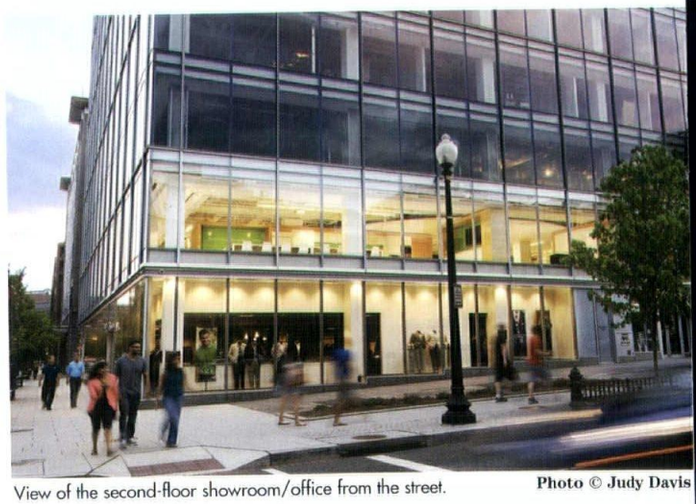
Elsewhere in the showroom and office areas, all the contract furn ishings are standard items from more than a dozen manufacturers that MOI represents. Such a mix is an unusual design strategy, appropriate for MOI but tricky to pull off. The unified character of the space was achieved only by careful selection and placement.

"We like to think that this is the office of the 21st century," says Davis. While doubtless office space design will continue to evolve, at least for now, MOI's office/showroom is both a highly functional working environment and a successful advertisement for the new brand that MOI seeks to become.



Rece ption area, with reception desk in foreground.

Photo © Judy Davis



View of the second-floor showroom/office from the street.

Photo © Judy Davis

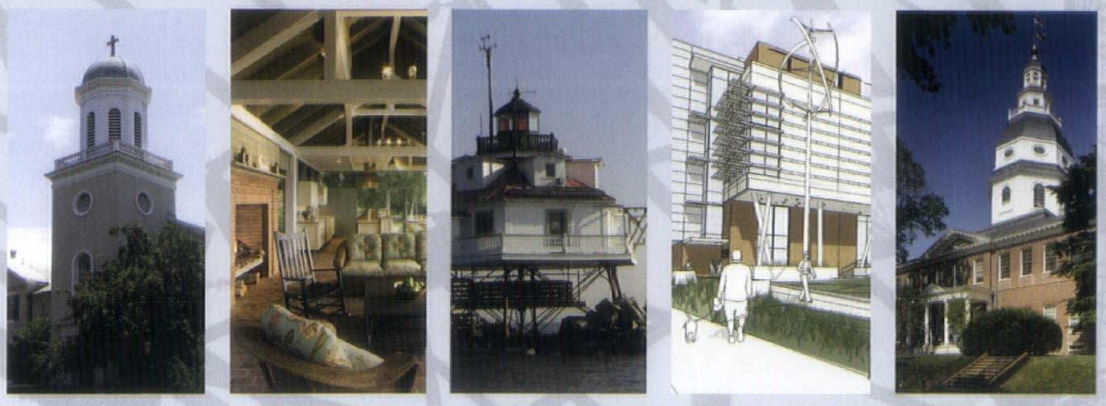


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View of the white box inserted into the existing bu
to accommodate the office and other public space

Photo © Anice Hoachl

Architecture for Art's Sake:

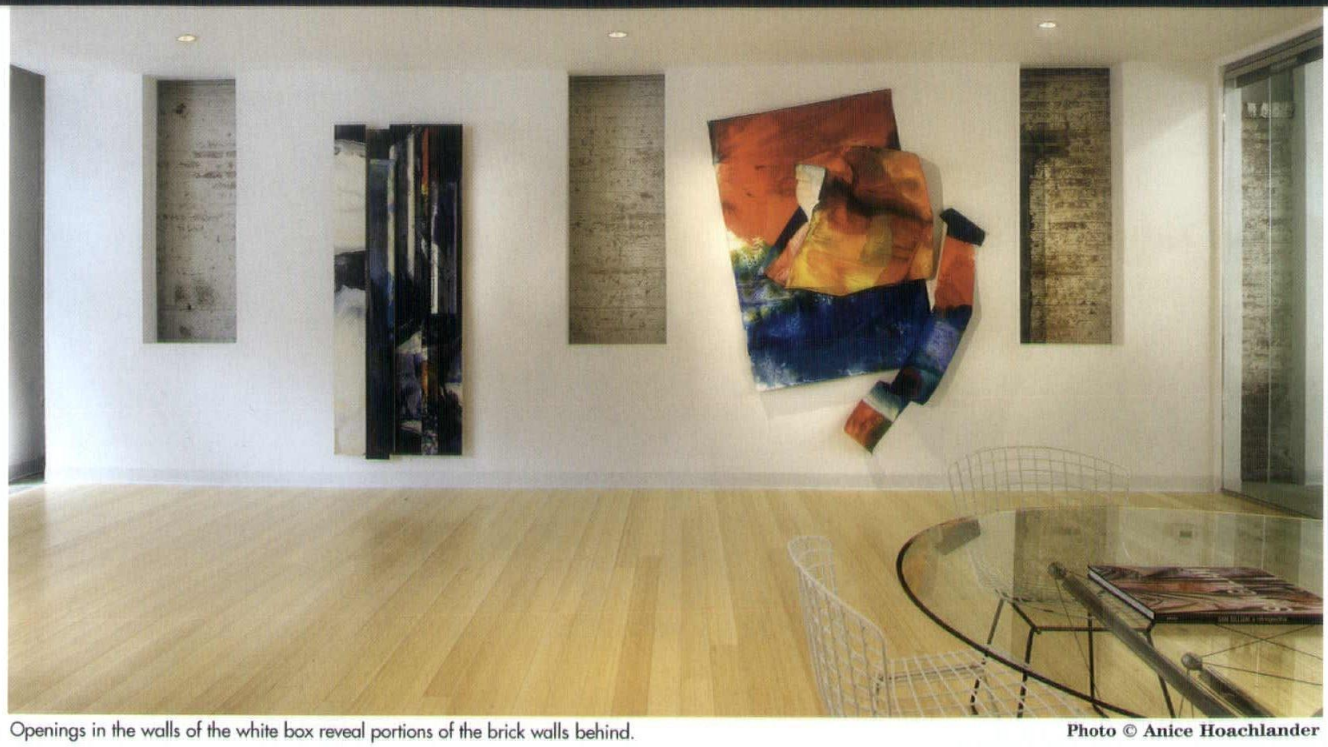
New Studio Gives Painter Room to Create

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

One day in the mid-1960s, Sam Gilliam, a Mississippi-born artist who had moved to Washington a few years earlier, hung one of his painted canvases without the stretcher—the rigid, rectangular armature that gives a traditional painting its characteristic, unchanging shape. Other unstretched works followed, sometimes suspended from the wall, sometimes from the ceiling. These "draped" canvases blurred the lines between painting and sculpture, and soon attracted the attention of other artists, critics, and collectors. Gilliam, who already had ties to the famed Washington Color School of abstract painters, quickly rose to prominence in contemporary art circles.

Gilliam gradually moved beyond the draped paintings to explore other materials and formats, and eventually began to garner large commissions from building developers and owners. Around 1980 or so, he hired a young architect named **Steven Spurlock, AIA,** to help him make models of these commissioned works and the spaces they would occupy. Spurlock also made technical drawings of the artworks for use in the fabrication process. The architect later joined **Joseph Wnuk, AIA,** to form the firm of **Wnuk Spurlock Architecture.** He maintained a working relationship and friendship with Gilliam over the ensuing decades.

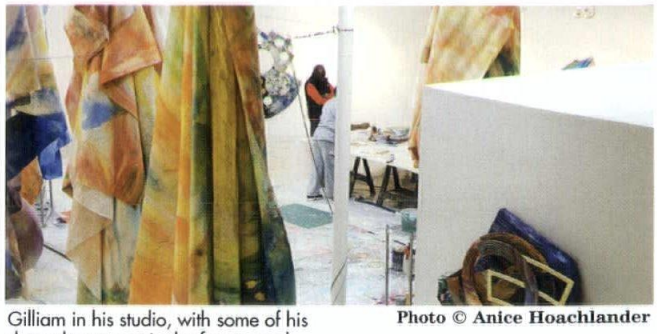
A few years ago, Gilliam had grown tired of his long-time studio space and was looking for a new place to work. He purchased a small industrial building in the 16th Street Heights neighborhood in Northwest DC, and not surprisingly, called on Wnuk Spurlock to oversee its renovation.



Openings in the walls of the white box reveal portions of the brick walls behind. **Photo © Anice Hoachlander**



View from the mezzanine into the studio space. **Photo © Anice Hoachlander**



Gilliam in his studio, with some of his draped canvases in the foreground. **Photo © Anice Hoachlander**



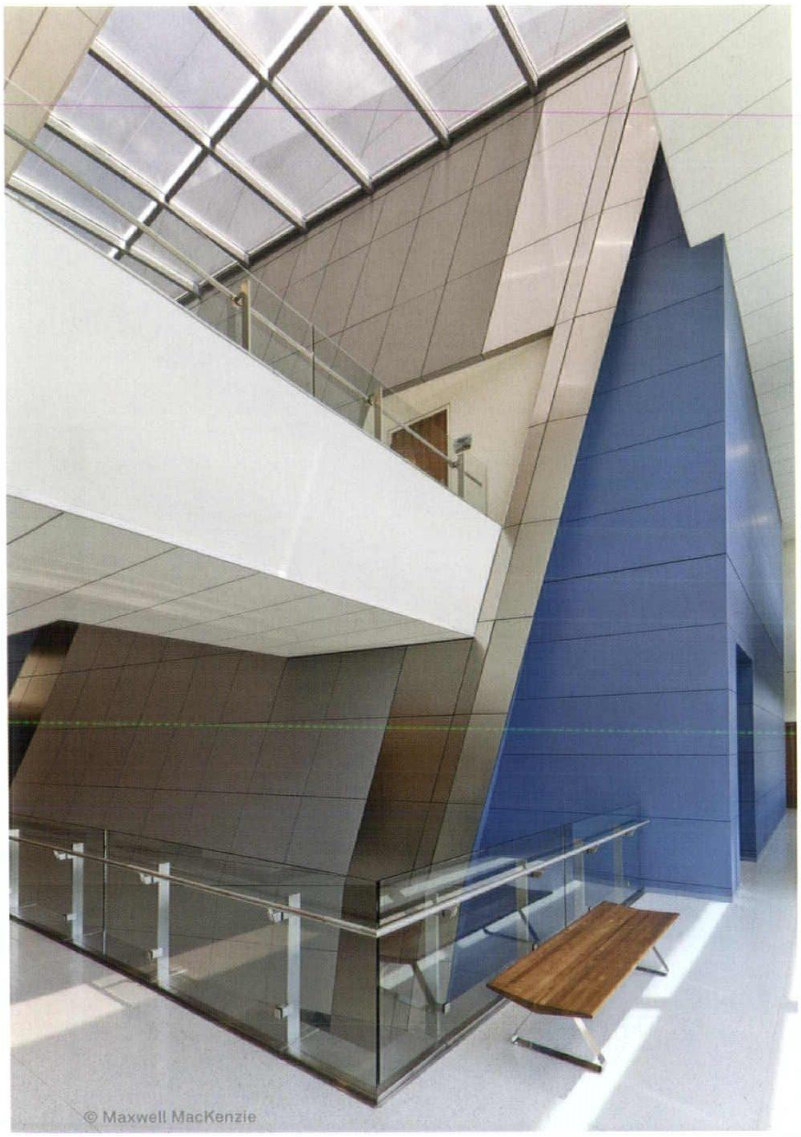
The low-key entrance to the studio. **Photo © Anice Hoachlander**

"At one point [the existing building] had been a gas station," said Spurlock. "Then they closed it in and built a structure around it, with party walls on either side. It was an odd, leftover space with a variety of materials and paint finishes."

The irregular geometry and hodgepodge of finishes were not inherently inappropriate for an artist's studio, but the project also called for office space, a small gallery, a woodshop, and storage areas, all of which demanded a degree of order and clarity. To accommodate the more public functions, the architects placed a simple, white, two-story box within the historic structure. The box is pulled away from the perimeter of the building to appear as a freestanding structure (though it is actually braced to the existing masonry walls). Rectangular cutouts in the new, white structure reveal sections of the original brick walls, suggesting framed artworks that contrast with Gilliam's own, typically free-form pieces, which are often hung between the openings.

Throughout the studio area, various other smooth, white insertions serve practical functions while providing a visual counterpoint to the rough texture of the pre-existing brick. "One of the long walls to the north was an exterior, uninsulated, [concrete] block wall," explained Spurlock, "so we furred that out to create more hanging space for works of art. As for the storage, we didn't want to line walls with closets, so we came up with a storage room that kind of floats inside the main space. We added

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Smooth, white surfaces contrast with the rough brick of the existing structure.

Photo © Anice Hoachlander

Project: Gilliam Art Studio, Washington, DC

Architects: **Wnuk Spurlock Architecture**
Structural Engineers: **Simpson Gumpertz & Heger**
MEP Engineers: **Metropolitan Consulting Engineers**
Contractor: **Glass Construction**

mechanical and electrical systems, put high windows on the back wall, and put in all the skylights."

The completed project strikes a balance between the messy process of creating large-scale artworks and the more buttoned-down, business side of the operation. Visitors to the office area catch glimpses of the creative activity under way in the studio behind a large, uninterrupted glass wall, while the striking presence of the white box constantly reminds the artist and his associates of the public aspects of their work.

The new space has already had a direct impact on Gilliam's art. "The big draped pieces were a part of what he did early on," noted Spurlock. "He hadn't done them for a while, though—he would not have been able to do those in the old space—but now he has room. Now he can do them again."

According to Spurlock, Gilliam has been thrilled with the project, and recently said to the architect, "I'm so excited. I've got this great space now, and I feel like I need to make great art to live up to it."











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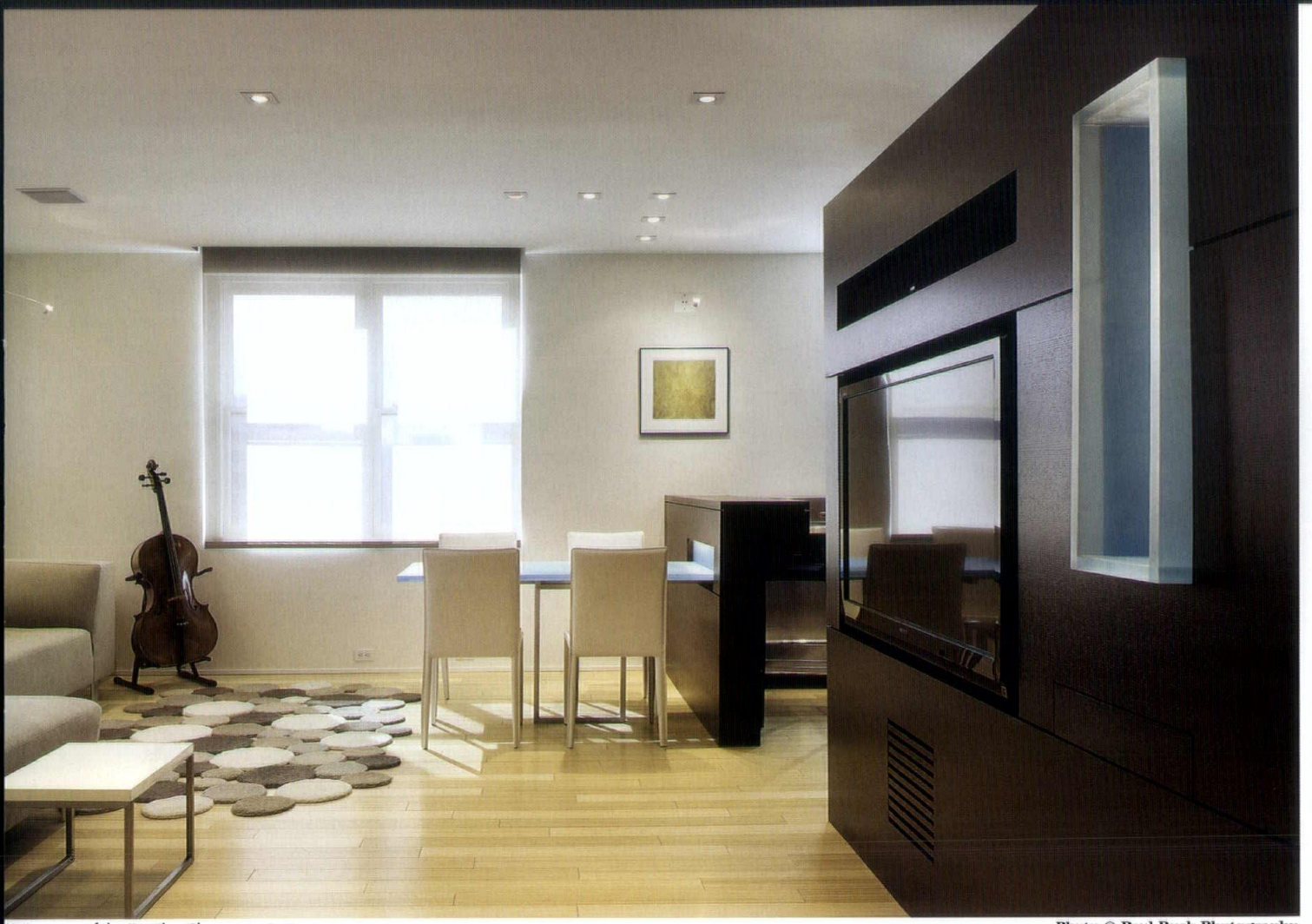
Strategic Designs Address Divergent Challenges in Residential Projects

by Denise Liebowitz

When it comes to interior renovations, some spaces call out for punch and others for calm. Architects and designers routinely confront drab, featureless rooms where the challenge is to inject some vitality and character; just as often they face busy, confusing spaces that need order and cohesion. The design tools they use to achieve the desired result are the same: color, pattern, and texture. Two recent residential makeovers illustrate the point.

Inserting Drama into a Dull Space

A standard-issue, one-bedroom apartment in Washington, DC, was the bland canvas **Janet Bloomberg, AIA,** principal of **KUBE Architecture,** had to work with. "The place was very dated, and although our client began by primarily wanting to renovate the kitchen, the program gradually expanded to the rest of the apartment," said Bloomberg. Work began on the 750-square-foot apartment by laying new bamboo flooring, reframing door and window openings, updating lighting, and installing motorized window shades. But all that was to simply prepare a clean, neutral background for the drama she envisioned. "We wanted to completely transform the entire space with the insertion of just three very special custom elements." The three objects of everyday living—a media wall, a bar-dining table, and a shower—introduce bold color, textured finishes, and organic patterns that reinvent the previously undistinguished apartment as contemporary living space with visual impact and interest.



Living area of the Eat-Play-Cleanse project.

Photo © Paul Burk Photography

The bold-scale, freestanding media wall organizes the space and asserts a straight-edged geometry in the living area. Constructed of ash and stained dark brown, the wall contrasts strongly with the light-colored floors and neutral palette in the rest of the space. "I had originally thought of doing the media wall in a medium-tone brown," recalled Bloomberg. "But one day it just struck me that with those bamboo floors, I wanted a much darker color."

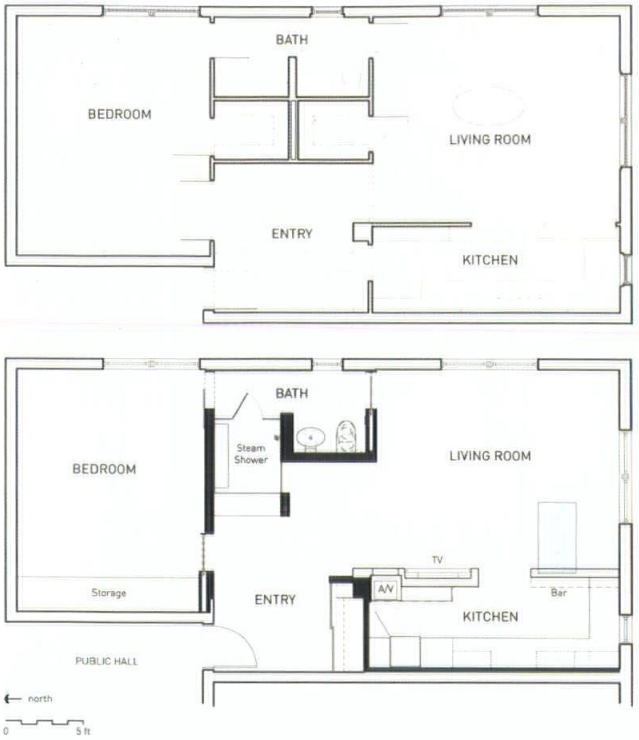
The textured dark ash continues along to the kitchen bar that incorporates a dining table constructed of an unexpected blue acrylic, set on a simple aluminum frame, and glowing with LED lights. A jolt of the same ethereal blue is repeated in the media wall and extends the visual conversation among highly contrasting colors, organic and man-made materials, and natural and machined textures. The media wall is an electronic hub that controls light, sound, and communication throughout the apartment. In addition to the flat-screen TV, it houses a stereo, subwoofer, amplifier, DVD player, and speakers, all concealed within the 14-inch depth of the wall. The homeowner controls the media wall with his iPhone.

The kitchen itself is a budget-conscious mix of IKEA glossy grey cabinetry, stainless counters and backsplash, and some new and re-used appliances. "We love IKEA kitchens," Bloomberg enthused. "They just keep improving the quality, and we don't see much of a difference between these and high-end European manufacturers."



The "Cleanse" component of the Eat-Play-Cleanse project—the shower as seen from the entry.

Photo © Paul Burk Photography



Before and after plans of the apartment. **Courtesy of KUBE Architecture**

The third dramatic insertion in the apartment is a high-function steam shower complete with body sprays, stereo system and customized scenes and colors of LED lighting. Enclosed by full-height glass panels, the shower room is prominently located along the apartment's entry hall, a placement dictated by the building's plumbing lines. Modesty is preserved in this relatively public location with glass that changes from transparent to frosted. Although replete with technological bells and whistles, the shower looks and feels connected to the natural world. The shower's dark, linear wall tiles evoke the texture of long wooden planks and the pattern of the tile floor suggests shadows of trees on the ground. Beyond the glass wall, a dry trough of loose river stones forms a threshold and extends the organic quality of the bathing experience.

"We were really able to totally transform the entire space and stay on our client's budget by focusing on just three very custom, original elements," reported Bloomberg. In fact, she refers to the project as "Eat, Play, Cleanse" to underscore the three essential activities of everyday living that shaped the design. And of her client, she said, "He was great, and gave us almost free rein. He allowed us to invent, bring him our best ideas, and was prepared to say yes."

A Chaotic Master Suite Finds Calm

While one architect selects colors and materials to animate a dull room and introduce visual interest, another architect is making those selections to bring tranquility to a confused and choppy space. "I always thought of our bedroom as the 'before' photograph," said the owner of a traditional neoclassical brick house in upper Northwest Washington. The second-floor master bedroom and bath suite, while spacious enough, was a warren of nooks and crannies, angled eaves and dormers, and misaligned ceilings and walls. Closet space was in short supply, the bathroom was 30 years old, the lighting was terrible, and most of all, the wife wanted a comfortable place to read. "I saw photographs in *The Washington Post* of a master bedroom that Andreas had done and I kept that clipping for two years," she said, referring to **Andreas Charalambous, AIA,** principal of **FORMA Design.**

When the couple finally called in Charalambous, they first focused on their desire for a reading nook. They soon raised their goals when they realized they could resolve many of the annoying quirks of the master suite, and redo the hall bathroom as well.

"The overall goal was to bring order to the space," said Charalambous. "The walls did not align with the varying ceiling heights, making the rooms choppy and confusing. We reconfigured the master bath and closet area to integrate with the new bedroom and put in plenty of lighting." Sycamore paneling and custom built-ins for books, desk, and storage form the perimeter of the room and extend into the closet area and both bathrooms. Custom millwork around the windows helps integrate them with cabinetry. This continuity of color and material unifies a cut-up space and introduces a sense of order and cohesion. A key element of the design is the sycamore headboard that extends up the wall behind the bed and across the ceiling as a canopy. "We love that canopy," reported the homeowner. "It really distracts from all the angled ceilings, and the recessed lights are on dimmers, which is great."

"We chose sycamore over maple for its lively texture," said the architect, and to contrast with all that light wood, he pulled up the bedroom rug and ebonized the wood floors. While the clients didn't feel they needed a fireplace, they loved the idea of candles in a fireplace-like niche below the flat screen.

For the all-important reading chair, the homeowners chose a classic Harry Bertoia-designed, asymmetrical chaise from Knoll Studio upholstered in a distinctive amber-orange color. In another gesture to unify the room, Charalambous used the same fabric in the desk area and repeated the color in custom runners in the bedroom and closet area.

In addition to floating, sycamore cabinetry and Silestone counters, the master bath features a frosted glass panel over the double sinks that incorporates round and square mirrors. An oversized walk-in shower paved and backed with grouted river stones includes a free-standing shower head.

"We selected finishes designed for contrast and texture and used bold punches of color to bring cohesion to this confused space, but overall this was an architectural rather than decorative solution," said Charalambous.







The bedroom and bathroo before renov

Renovated bedroom of the Upper Northwest Master Suite project by FORMA Design.

Photo © Geoffrey Hodgdon

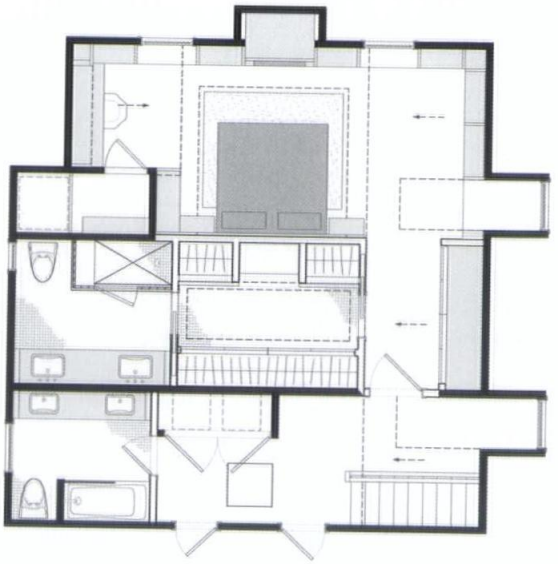


Renovated bathroom of the Upper Northwest Master Suite project by FORMA Design.

Photo © Geoffrey Hodgdon

Project: Upper Northwest Master Suite, Washington, DC

Architects: **FORMA Design, Inc.**
Contractor: **MCA Remodeling**
Cabinetry: **Art Creations**



Plan of the master suite as renovated.

Courtesy of Andreas Charalambous, FORMA Design



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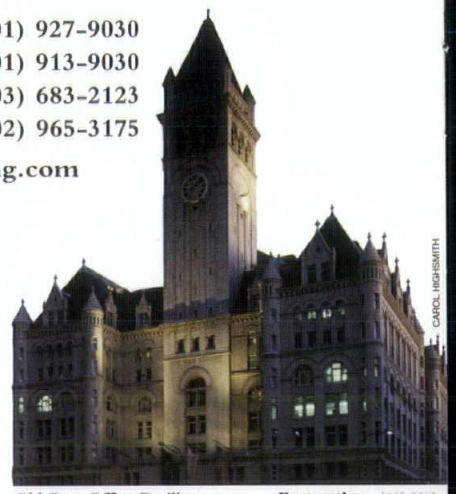
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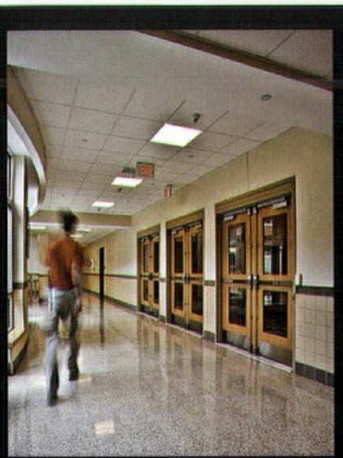
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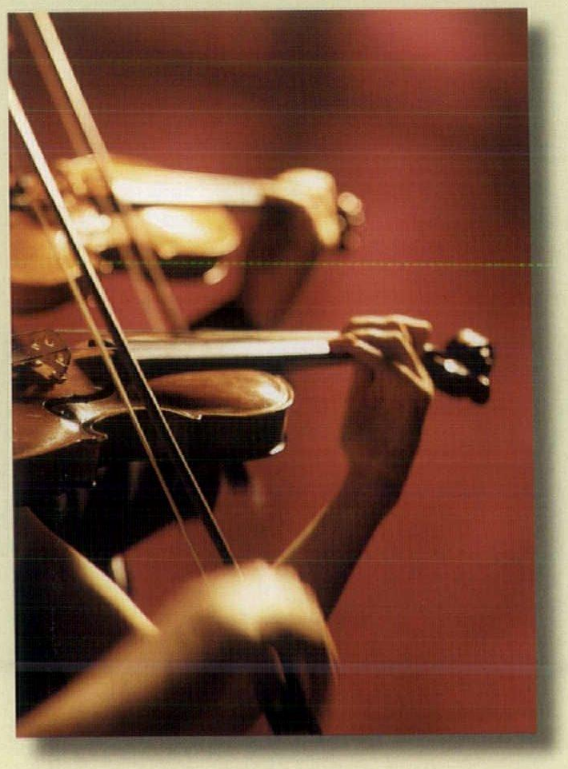
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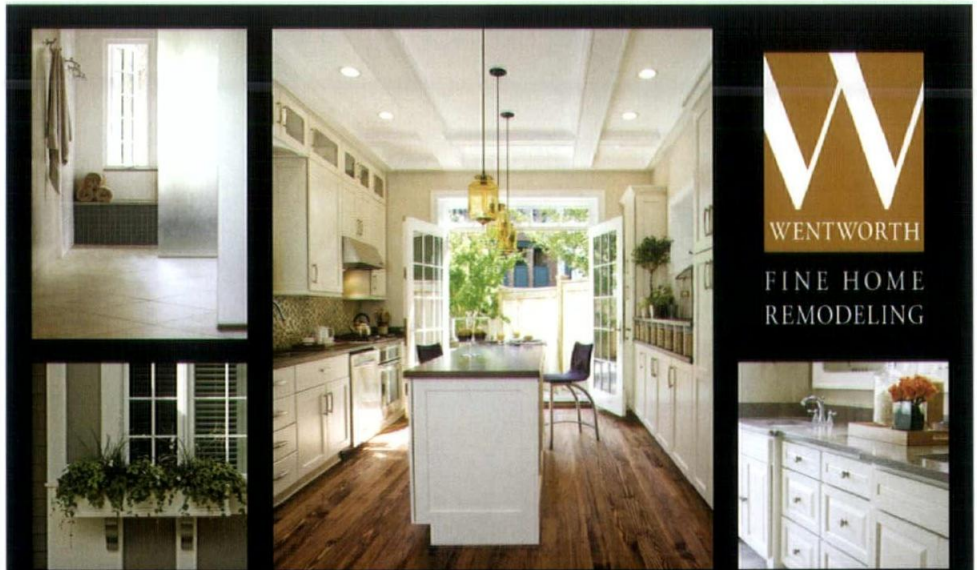
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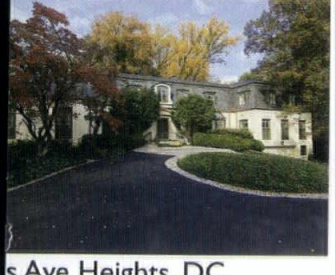
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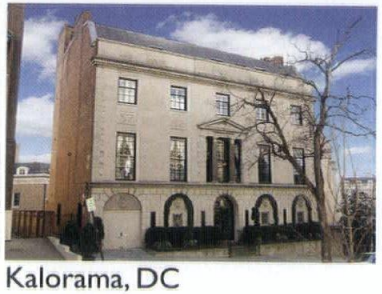
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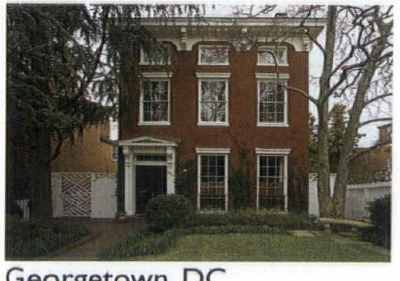




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